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The Outlaw Hunter;

OR,
Red John, the Bush Ranger.

BY FRANCIS JOHNSON,
AUTHOR OF "THE GOLD GUIDE," "THE DEATH
TRACK," "ALAPAH," "ASSOWAUM,"
"THE BUSH RANGER," ETC.

CHAPTER I.

THE ARRESTED CONVICT.

THE brief twilight of Australia was fast deepening into murky night. From the distant forest of lofty gum-trees could be faintly heard the shrill notes of the various wild birds, as they hastened to their nocturnal resting-places high up amid the waving branches, the startling laugh of the jackass-bird, and the wild cry of the kangaroo. Mingled with these discordant sounds were the more familiar ones of the lowing of kine, the bellowing of the oxen, and occasionally the sharp crack of the stock-driver's huge whip, as he drove the cattle into the inclosure.

At this time a strange scene was being enacted in the somewhat rude, but exceedingly comfortable dwelling of one of the better class of settlers—men who had voluntarily left all the refinements of civilization to seek a free home beneath the brilliant constellation of the Southern Cross.

A gentlemanly person—known to the residents of the house by the name of M'Donald—who was a great favorite in the family, to whom he had rendered a most important service, was suddenly denounced as an escaped convict, by Lieutenant Walker of the Colonial police force, after that officer had managed, by a skillful stratagem, to place Irons on M'Donald's wrists.

Besides Mr. Powell, the owner of the dwelling, and his wife, two beautiful and highly-accomplished young ladies—their daughters—were present.

Both Mr. M'Donald and Lieutenant Walker were men of far more than ordinary muscular strength, and a conflict between them would probably have

been fatal to one of them. The possibility of successful resistance had, however, been frustrated by the ingenious device of the Lieutenant of Police.

Sarah, the eldest daughter, had evidently feelings of a more tender and sympathetic nature than mere friendship for M'Donald, on whom her gaze had been earnestly and admiringly fixed at the very moment that the officer proclaimed him to be a malefactor of the worst description, and who had but recently escaped from prison.

M'Donald's arrest produced dismay and confusion in Mr. Powell's quiet family circle. If an apparition had appeared before them out of the ground, they could not have been more frightened than they were at the discovery of the real character of that man who had gained a place in all their affections.

Sarah's fainting fit drew the attention of the family toward her; and M'Donald himself, on seeing the poor girl fall to the ground, made an unconscious movement, as if to hasten to her

assistance; but he quickly collected himself, let his arms fall, and said to Walker, in a low voice:

"Take me away!"

This, however, was easier said than done; and, Walker, alarmed by Sarah's last words, scarcely knew how to act; he was sorely puzzled what to do with the prisoner. While standing irresolute, Mr. Bale, who had been a frightened spectator of this scene, walked up to him, and laying his broad hand upon his shoulder, said to him in an earnest tone of voice:

"Mr. Walker, I—I do not know whether you have a right to apprehend this man here. It is possible—nay, likely—that you have a warrant, without which you would not venture to lay hands upon an Englishman, under the hospitable roof of an Australian squatter; but I think we are also entitled to ask what proofs you possess. Mr. M'Donald—zounds, man! at least tell us yourself whether you are the person he takes you to be, or if what he states be correct! Should it be nothing more than

a mere suspicion, I'll be hanged if he shall take you away in that fashion, like a common criminal, with his blacks! You behaved like a man the other day, and perhaps saved my life. You even delivered this young lady, for whom we would all willingly lay down our lives, out of the hands of those worthless blacks; and I think these grounds are quite sufficient to justify our taking your part."

"Stop, sir!" said Walker, whom these words recalled to himself, and he boldly and sternly strode toward the honest stock-keeper. "I am engaged in the service of Her Majesty, to apprehend, wherever I can find them, the bush rangers who infest the land; and I have the warrant against Jack Loudon, alias M'Donald. He may deny that he is the man; and I shall produce the proofs—at least, such proofs as fully empower me to take him away, and give him up to the courts of justice, which may then decide whether I have exceeded my duty and deserve punishment. To them I will submit; but I shall resist by force any violent interference with my proceedings. The consequence be upon the heads of any who venture to obstruct me in the execution of my duty."



THE NEXT INSTANT KUYUNKO FELL DEAD TO THE GROUND.

M'Donald appeared to be about to speak; but, although he opened his lips, not a sound escaped. His eyes were anxiously riveted upon Sarah, who remained in a senseless state.

"Oh, speak, M'Donald!" said Mr. Powell, leaving his daughter, and seizing the fettered hands of the unfortunate man. "Free us from this torture and anxiety. You know how dear you are to us all; you know how much we owe to you, and that we cannot, will not believe that you, for whom I would have pledged my wealth, my honor, can be a criminal! I will not credit that you are one of those unfortunate men who mark their path through the bush by plunder and murder!"

"Mr. Powell!" exclaimed M'Donald, as if overcome by these earnest words, "I thank you—thank you from the bottom of my heart for your confidence in me. Preserve that confidence, and be assured I am no criminal."

"That's what I thought!" exclaimed Bale, in triumph. "And now, Mr. Police officer, the proofs!"

"Do you require them, Mr. Powell?" inquired Walker, "and would you refuse to give him up unless they were produced?"

"I would at least spare him this shame," said he, pointing to the handcuffs, "by becoming bail for him, and accompanying you to town. But I am curious to know how you have so suddenly become certain of the identity of this gentleman and the bush ranger, since you had no notion of it this morning. In that case, you would not have sent all your men away."

"I can explain that in a few words," replied Walker, narrowly watching the prisoner. "You are perfectly correct in saying that I had no notion this morning who this pretended M'Donald was. The information that the hut-keeper (whom M'Donald confessed to be an acquaintance of his, and whom he has spoken favorably of) was a most dangerous bush ranger first excited my suspicions. As I returned home, with the firm intention of inquiring into the matter, I found—" he stopped suddenly. Sarah had recovered her senses, and he perceived that her eyes were firmly riveted upon him.

He wished to stop, but she beckoned with impatience for him to continue.

"You found?" Powell said.

"I found the gray charger on which M'Donald came to this station."

"Well, and what of that?" asked Bale, quickly. "Was that stolen too?"

"Yes, and no. The prisoner took him away unknown to the owner, and without his consent; but left what might have been considered the price of the animal near the house; certainly an unusual thing for a bush ranger to do. The £15, too, afforded an additional proof. My suspicions were afterward fully confirmed on my return to the house. I then recognized the fugitive, whom I had seen once before, although only hastily, and whom I did not know at first, on account of his beard. The bullet fired in the bush, and which comes out of my sergeant's carbine, was scarcely necessary to convince me. It is his passion for books which set the police again upon his tracks, as, to procure them, he even ventured with indescribable boldness into Melbourne. If further proofs are wanted," he continued, in a low voice, on seeing Sarah conceal her face in her hands, overwhelmed with sorrow, "I can furnish them from my blacks. Fearing these fellows, M'Donald has worn larger boots than he requires all the time we have been here. My man managed to procure those which he wore before, and opinion only confirms the certainty of the accusation. Now, ask him, and let him deny, if he can, that he is the man known in Van Diemen's Land under the name of Jack Loudon, and who afterward made his escape."

M'Donald had listened to the speaker motionless, and without interrupting him by a single word. Now, when the eyes of all were directed toward him, and as all were looking in mute dismay at the pale, guilty features, he said suddenly, in a firm, calm voice:

"I am Jack Loudon—at least, in the sense which Lieutenant Walker means—although my real name is M'Donald."

"Gracious God!" exclaimed Mr. Powell, striking his hands together, while the honest stock-keeper could not suppress an oath, and then turned affrighted toward the ladies.

"Nevertheless, I am not guilty." I am not the criminal you take me to be," exclaimed the unfortunate man. "Transported, and guiltless

—strange, incredible as it may sound—still it is the truth I am telling you. But that, he added, suddenly checking himself, and in almost an inaudible voice, "is all that I can tell you. As regards my apprehension, I certainly did hope Lieutenant Walker would have kept sacred the peace of this house. Perhaps the time may come, although it will not be just yet, when I shall call him to account for his conduct in this respect."

"The accusation is hard, and I should gladly give the satisfaction," replied the young man, gloomily, "were it compatible with my duty. This duty, at the same time, compelled me to apprehend, as quickly as possible, the criminal denounced as dangerous by the State. Your departure, I heard, was fixed upon for to-morrow. All my men were away: what else could I do, if I did not wish to accomplish my purpose by violence and bloodshed, but have recourse to a stratagem? If you are innocent, you will be able to prove it legally. To furnish you with that opportunity is now my duty."

"Then take me away," said M'Donald, "and bring this scene, which is painful to all, to a close."

"Stop!" exclaimed Mr. Powell, within whom a resolution had evidently been struggling for the last few minutes. "Mr. Walker, you will deem me, I hope, a loyal subject to the crown—"

"I never in my life doubted it, sir!" the young man quickly answered. "I never thought, for a single instant, that you had even the notion—"

"Stop—do not misconstrue my words," Mr. Powell interrupted him, with darkly-knit brows. "That I would not knowingly receive a bush ranger into my house, no one can doubt; and I consider myself too much above such a suspicion to have the slightest intention of exonerating myself. I cannot tell how it is, but something makes me feel an interest in this unfortunate man. To me he has shown himself a man of honor; he has, besides, saved my dear child. We all have cause to be grateful to him, and my heart revolts at seeing him bound in fetters like a common criminal."

Mr. Powell was silent for an instant, as if overcome by his feelings, and all looked up to him full of expectation. At last he continued, in a low but firm voice:

"I know it is your duty, as things stand, to take him to the nearest court. I do not know where you—"

"I shall take him to the nearest police-station, at the mouth of the Darling," replied Walker. "The chief of that station will undertake to escort him to Van Diemen's Land, or Sydney, as he may think fit."

"Very well!" replied the old gentleman. "What if I now become bail, in any sum you may like to name, for the prisoner's safe arrival at the place of destination, Sydney or Melbourne? If I become bail for him, and if his word of honor is sufficient to me, surely you will not refuse?"

"My good father!" said Sarah, who had approached him, as he uttered the last words, and placed her head upon his shoulder.

Walker bit his lips, seemed surprised at the offer; Bale was delighted, and he nodded contentedly with his head, and rubbed his hands with great glee.

If he really was a bush ranger, thought the stock-keeper, at least he had not stolen the horse, and had, moreover, behaved himself, during his sojourn among them, in a manner which had gained the hearts of all these rough sons of the bush. He felt assured of his innocence, and if he surrendered to the judges, what else could be required of him? The prisoner, however, waved the apparent advantage offered to him.

"I thank you sincerely, deeply, noble-minded man," he exclaimed, before Walker could answer; "but I myself neither would nor could accept of it."

"Yourself?" exclaimed Mr. Powell, with surprise.

"I do not wish to be indebted in any way to the good will of this gentleman," M'Donald continued, with his teeth firmly set. "Let him do his worst to gain the price set upon my head!"

"You hear, Mr. Powell, how matters stand," replied the lieutenant with a shrug. "Under these circumstances you will understand it, if I do not wish to lose sight of this gentleman."

"How much is the head-money?" asked Bale, looking slyly at the officer.

Walker blushed deeply. The glance which he cast upon the overseer, and which the latter certainly met pretty indifferently, plainly showed that, at any other time, he would not have let such a question pass unnoticed. His duty, however, fixed him to this place, and he replied in a grave voice:

"God is my witness that I would joyfully have paid the head money out of my own pocket, if I could have spared you all this bow."

"And why did you choose such a moment to carry out your plans?" cried Lisbeth, with streaming eyes, and her cheeks flushed with anger. "I shall never forget your conduct."

"Peace!" said Mr. Powell, taking the arm of his child, "Mr. Walker has only done his duty. Whether he might have executed it at another place and in a more pleasant manner, is a question he may settle with his own conscience. As matters now stand, and since M'Donald refuses my bail, nothing remains to be done but to finish what has been commenced."

"You will allow me, sir, to take one of your outhouses to-night?" said Walker. "I should not like to make your house a jail. I expect to start at break of day."

"After what has occurred you may make it a jail if you please. Your own room, or that before occupied by your prisoner, whichever seems safest, is at your disposal."

"And will you allow me to take a black servant?"

"Pray ask me no further questions," Mr. Powell observed, hastily. "Do as you think best. Her majesty's servants have full power to act under my roof as the law requires. I now take my leave of you, Mr. Walker, as you will probably set off with your prisoner to-morrow morning before I am out of bed."

The young man felt the bitterness which lay in these words, and bowed coldly.

"And you, M'Donald," said the old gentleman, turning to the prisoner, without, however, shaking his hand, "fare you well, and may God grant that you may clear yourself of the suspicion weighing upon you; if not, may God pardon you the sorrow you have brought upon my house!"

M'Donald started up with a quick and violent motion, but the fetters prevented any movement. He wished to speak, but his glance fell upon Sarah, who hid her face on her father's shoulders.

With a deep sigh he turned round to Walker, who understood his look, and followed by the officer, hastily left the room.

CHAPTER II.

TOBY.

On the morning when the black police unexpectedly arrived at the station on the Murray, Toby, the new hut-keeper of the Dry Swamp Station, was sitting before his hut, and, for want of tobacco, was sulkily chewing a twig which he had broken off a bush in the neighborhood. The shepherd had just gone off with his stock, and the place was left to the care of this discontented individual.

"Hem!" he murmured at last, with an oath, "here I am, in this accursed nest, dying of weariness. Hut-keeper, with twenty pounds per annum—a good interest for the hundred set upon my head. Not a pipe of tobacco, and with the prospect of being thrived up in this dry life and place, like a mushroom. If it were not to rest my sore feet and weary limbs, I should play the very devil in watching their sheep, and spoil the wild dogs' sport. Queer country this; the world turned upside down, where they make a regular bush ranger a hut-keeper, the fox a guardian, and after all leave him nothing he could steal. Cursed country! nothing for a thousand miles one way or other. I must, somehow, manage to return to the coast, and get into a better country. If that rascally stock-keeper would only come with the tobacco—with tobacco I'll go anywhere. And Jack Loudon here too—a gentleman as usual—on a damned good horse. Well, John can run. I hope at least the bloodhounds of the so-called 'justice' will not interfere with one here; and, by the devil's help, John will also get a good horse again, and a good coat upon his back. If I only get the horse, the rest will soon follow. Hallo! who comes here?" he exclaimed, on hearing the sound of hoofs. He rose to get his gun out of the hut, in case he might need it. On recognizing through the gum trees, the form of the overseer, he stuck his hands into his pockets and went out to meet him.

"Well, Toby, hard at work?" said Bale, galloping up to him, and pulling up short before him. "These hurdles must be mended, and the roof also would be no worse for a few sheets of bark. I think I told you this before; do you intend to follow the example of your predecessor?"

"I'll be hanged," replied the new hut-keeper, sulkily, "if I do a piece of work before I have some tobacco between my teeth. My throat is so dry that I can hardly breathe."

The overseer laughed.

"Very well," he said, putting his hand into his pocket, and throwing him the much-longed-for tobacco; "if that's all, I have brought some. But now the machine is greased, I hope it will work."

"Think so," replied Toby, with satisfied mien. Without further ado he tore the paper, and as soon as he found a corner uncovered bit into the whole piece. "You'll be satisfied with me. Hang it! that's good!"

"How long have you been without tobacco?"

"How long? It must be an eternity. I have lost all notion of time since. To-day a new year begins."

"Where is Hendricks?"

"Gone for a walk with the sheep."

"In what direction?"

"Oh, in what direction? That way. I saw him just where that tall pine tree is standing."

The overseer had just turned his horse's head in the direction pointed out, when it occurred to him that he had something else to tell the hut-keeper.

"Hallo, Toby!" he shouted to him, as the latter was returning into the hut to fetch a pipe in order to derive double pleasure from his long-denied refreshment.

"Mister!" said he, leisurely turning his head.

"The dray will very likely come to-morrow morning. It is possible the governor may want a few more sheep, unless he should kill at the station."

"Why, bless me! The whole load can't be eaten up yet?" Toby exclaimed, with astonishment.

"It won't last long. We have numerous visitors, a swarm of the black police is quartered at the station. Well, don't keep the man too long to-morrow morning with the bullocks." Without waiting for a reply, the overseer set spurs to his horse and soon disappeared among the bushes, leaving his new hut-keeper in by no means a joyful surprise. He even forgot his pipe at this unwelcome news, and stared after the horseman as long as he could see him.

"The devil!" he muttered; "this is a pretty business! The bloodhounds here! My only hope now lies in the bush. Well! well! well! There will be the devil to pay! A hut-keeper in the bush, with a pound of tobacco as an earnest, and the black brutes perhaps upon my tracks the very next hour. Now Jack Loudon will be awfully pleased at this. 'Johnny, Johnny! a desperate business this; and if you get out of the scrape this time, I shall have all possible respect for you!' But after all," he added, with a toss of his head, "who knows whether they will come so far? We must not shout before we are hurt, and with time comes counsel. I shall not go away before they ferret me out and force me to take to my heels; in this soft soil I should have them all behind me in a line. A blind man could feel these tracks in the sand with a stick. But we'll keep a sharper look-out at any rate; and if they do come, curse them," he added, with a dark expression, "they will discover that they have not chased Red John for three days in the bush, and forced him to fraternize with these blacks, without teaching him some of their cunning. Besides, my gun will be of service; and as long as I have powder and ball, I shall easily keep them off."

With these words he went into the hut, quietly cut sufficient for a pipe, filled it, and, while puffing away with evident pleasure, took his gun. He carefully drew out the old charge, cleaned the barrels, loaded afresh, and slung the weapon across his shoulders, and then set about the work he had to do at the hurdles. Should the dray come in the morning, he would at least learn from the driver what the blacks were about. Perhaps, too, they had gone away, and in that case he had nothing to rear.

He had not finished his work at the hurdles

until the afternoon, and he then set about repairing the roof. For the work at hand he needed a few large sheets of bark, and armed with a small hatchet, which he found sticking in one of the posts, he walked slowly to an old lagoon, on the border of which stood several large gum-trees.

As a necessary precaution, he took his gun with him, and placed it behind one of the trees, a little out of sight, in case the overseer should return that way, after which he cut and stripped off the necessary sheets of bark with a practiced hand. He was so deeply engaged in his work, that he actually for a moment forgot the circumstances in which he was placed. While occupied in piling up the bark, he suddenly heard a voice close by, calling him by his bush name, "Red John."

He turned round as if stung by an adder, and he certainly had sufficient cause to be frightened. Scarcely fifteen paces from him, with his gun leveled at him, though nodding to him in a very friendly manner, stood a black, in the dreary uniform of the bush police. He called out to him with a laugh, on seeing his dismay.

"How do you do, Red John, hein? butsheril!—yabon butsheril!—yes—remain together now—going to great smoke (i. e. large town.) Stop! not stir!" he exclaimed, in a threatening manner, as the so-called "Toby," made an almost involuntary movement to the place where his gun was standing—"Kuyunko has bullet and much powder in it—puff! goes off, and makes hole in poor Red John!"

John was ready to burst with rage at being caught in this manner. He felt ashamed that the old cunning bush ranger had allowed himself to be thus outwitted by a soldier of the police. However, there was nothing to be done by violence for the moment; he knew very well that if he was only wounded by a shot, he must be lost in the bush. Besides, more of them might be near at hand, and they would be sooner attracted by the report of the gun. A hasty glance, however, which he cast at the tree behind which his gun was concealed, convinced him that the black did not suspect he was armed, or else he would have crept up to him from that side and made sure of him. There was therefore one hope left, and man still clings to it to the very last moment with all his might. All he could do now was to oppose cunning by cunning, and he scowled with great coolness, although with no friendly look on the black.

"Hallo!—what's up now? Can a man not quietly do his work in the bush, without such a black blue-coated gallows-bird sneaking up and leveling his gun at him? Are we among bush rangers here, or on a peaceable station?"

"All very well, Red John, very well," said the black, laughing with intense satisfaction at the success of his stratagem: "must not run away, or—puff! Bullet quicker than boomerang."

"Oh, go to grass!" growled the white man. "What do you want, and why do you call me Red John? My name is Toby, and I am hut-keeper here."

"Butsheril!" said the black, still laughing. "All very well—Mr. Walker will be very glad."

"Walker—the devil," thought John. "A pretty pickle you have got into." However he did not let the black see how uneasy this name made him, but replied:

"Who will be glad? Now hang it, do take your precious gun away! Don't you see, you blind mole, that I can't escape you?" At the same time, he slowly hobbled, with his back turned upon the black, toward the tree, which was about five paces from him, and laid himself down at the root.

Kuyunko watched this maneuver with great suspicion. He knew perfectly well, by the tracks which he had followed, that the white man was not lame and it could be nothing but a stratagem on his part, to put him off his guard. But the black laughed at the idea that the white man thought him so stupid, and as the bare sand-hill behind the tree formed a steep ascent of about forty paces, the bush ranger could not attempt to escape that way, without being all the time exposed to his fire, and so quietly let him do as he liked. He only put his gun down from his shoulder as he saw him sitting, and then walked up to him but still with the utmost caution.

"Who will be glad, eh?" John asked, again turning round to him.

"Well, Mr. Walker, the lieutenant," said the black.

"He!" exclaimed John, with such well acted joy, that even this cunning black felt perplexed. "Well, if he is there, then I have nothing to fear, my boy."

"Why, he wrote to me that he had my full pardon in his pocket. 'Pon my word, my good fellow, the news is worth a piece of tobacco.'"

"Tobacco! Have you got any?" Kuyunko asked, greedily, without, however, venturing within reach of his captive, considering it much safer to keep a respectful distance with his gun still in his hand.

"Well, I should think so," said the bush ranger, laughing; "the overseer brought me a pound. Do you want any?"

The black hesitated a moment before answering. But his conscience was not very scrupulous. What he could get out of the prisoner for himself was pure, unexpected gain; of course he would not let him off on that account. "Good," he said; "but then Red John will you go with Kuyunko to Lieutenant Walker?—do him no harm."

"Yes, I know his kindness of disposition," thought John, and then said aloud, feeling his pockets for his tobacco, with great calmness and apparent unconcern:

"Certainly, my boy, with the greatest of pleasure. I shall be d—d glad to see your lieutenant again. But what's become of this tobacco? Are you alone here?"

"Quite alone," replied Kuyunko, laughing, and not a little proud to have outwitted the dangerous bush ranger unassisted. "The others are all at the station."

"Ah—I think I put the tobacco into that bush, just behind you. Kuyunko; you are treading upon it."

Kuyunko looked cautiously toward the place pointed out, without, however turning his back upon John. It was only when he saw that the bush ranger remained on the ground leaning upon his elbow, that he turned his head to look for the tobacco. It was the work of a moment, yet enough for John to spring up, and before Kuyunko could raise his gun, or take aim, he jumped behind the tree. The black, not suspecting that John had a weapon concealed there, thought he only wished to get the tree between them, to run up the hill and escape into the bush. He therefore, with his gun to his shoulder, and without the least concern about his own safety, ran sideways toward the tree, wishing to get sight of the fugitive, when, suddenly, the latter jumped up close before him. The next instant the report of a gun re-echoed through the still forest, and Kuyunko, whose weapon slipped out of his grasp, stood motionless for a moment, staring at his assassin, then dropped his arms and fell dead to the ground.

Red John remained standing on the spot from which he had fired, reloading his gun.

"That's a *quietus* for him!" he muttered, according to his habit of speaking aloud when alone. "This rascal has his reward; but it won't be long before I have the whole pack upon my heels. Well, if the brute hadn't sneaked up like a cat, I should not have thought that they could outwit me in this fashion. What's to be done now? Bah! Red John has not been chased these three years like a wild hog for nothing. I need not despair now, with perhaps four-and-twenty hours' start! We'll see which is cleverer, I or these black heathens, whom our Christian governor set upon the white man as he does his bounds after foxes. They have not caught Red John yet; and if they would only send up their men one by one against me, I should put an end to all the precious police. Ha! ha! But, let us set to work, now, and I'll be hanged if I don't lead them by the nose until all is blue."

He listened cautiously for some time, trying to discover whether a new enemy was in pursuit, but all remained quiet; and this man, hardened in crime, set about, not concealing his deed—that, he knew, was impossible—but to endeavor to lead his pursuers astray; for he was aware that they would soon be upon his track. His sole object, therefore, was to place himself in security.

Having fired off the dead man's gun, he threw it down upon the ground beside him. After this he took his neckerchief off, and thoroughly saturated it in the blood of his victim. This neckerchief he placed upon a pretty large piece of bark, which he carried upon his shoulder, and then walked as quickly as he could toward

the hut, in order to provide himself with provisions and whatever else he might find useful. Now and then he stopped and let a drop of blood fall to the ground. He did not stay long in the hut, where he might at any moment be surprised by fresh spies; he broke open Hendricks's chest, which stood in a corner, took out some money, a clasp-knife, and a tinder-box, put the lid down again, and struck off in a straight direction for the river.

At first he bent his flight toward the river as quickly as his feet could carry him, carefully avoiding all soft places in the ground, which would have betrayed his tracks too plainly. That this would not insure his safety, and that the blacks would follow him as easily as upon a beaten road, he knew very well; but he must at least try to make them believe he wanted to throw them off the track. This was part of his plan, and he let a drop of blood fall here and there. In a word, he acted the part of a wounded man, who, at the commencement of his flight, ran as fast as he could, and whose strength was gradually failing. He stood still several times, and even sat down, always leaving traces of blood, although light ones. He reached the valley covered with the tall gum-trees just at sunset, and walked over the last few hundred paces which separated him from the river with slow and heavy steps. He laid down once, although only for a second, at the foot of a tree, and then sought a convenient place to swim across the river, which was tolerably deep at this part.

He chose a spot where the bank shelved on one side, but was steep on the other, and he used his sheet of bark as a canoe, to keep his gunpowder and blanket dry. Being an expert swimmer, he easily reached the opposite shore. Here he again endeavored to leave signs by which he hoped to throw the blacks off the scent. He stuck his fingers into the stiff clay soil, clung to the bank, as if he had been vainly attempting to climb up, brought his knee up, slipped down again, and passed the neckerchief saturated with blood a few times over the spot; he also left the impression of his gun in the soft soil. Then he carefully washed his sheet of bark, packed the things he wanted upon it, and, pulling his small canoe after him, swam slowly down the stream. It was already dusk; but he knew very well that for the night he had nothing to fear from pursuit. His chief object was not to leave any traces that might again set them on his track.

His calculation had been excellent. His foes would naturally await the return of their messenger before taking any steps to secure him. By the time they learned his fate, and Hendricks, enraged at his loss, could lodge a complaint against him, he would have gained a start of four-and-twenty hours. Moreover, Hendricks could know nothing of the black being murdered in the bush, even if he had heard the reports of the guns.

When the blacks found the corpse of their comrade, they, of course, easily followed the tracks of the fugitive, pointing with exultation at the blood which they thought came from some severe wound, as Kuyunko's gun had been discharged. They also discovered the traces of blood on the other side, as well as the other traces, left especially for their benefit. The sergeant at once gave up all hopes of securing the fugitive he had already made sure of, alive.

"My lads," said he to his men, "the rascal has been drowned, and the one hundred pounds look very bad, unless we should happen to find his floating corpse caught in the tracks of some gum-tree. At this place he tried to get out, and slipped back twice; he must have bled like a pig. 'Sdeath! I would give a finger to catch the fellow alive."

The only thing to be done was to search for the corpse of the murderer. The sergeant, therefore, immediately sent one of his men, Mahog, to give the lieutenant notice of the state of affairs; and the blacks stripped to dive for their prey under the water.

Few wild tribes are such practiced swimmers, especially divers, as the blacks on the shores of the Murray. Thrown, to a great extent, upon the resources of the river, they often walk for a considerable distance along the bottom, armed with their wooden spears, and spear lobsters and fish, which are frequently found under the trees that have fallen into the river. Thus they remain for several minutes under the water, ascend to the surface for a short time to breathe a moment, and disappear again beneath the waves.

The sergeant could not, therefore, have desired better assistants. The course of the river a little further down was obstructed by several large gum-trees which had fallen into it, and lay like lead at the bottom. But the blacks could not find in their slime-covered branches the least traces of the murderer, and night at last put a stop to their researches.

The sergeant had expected his lieutenant, and, as he did not arrive, he ordered his men to encamp for the night. With the first dawn of morning he broke up to return to the station, in order to report the partial success and partial failure of the expedition. He left two blacks by the river-side, to keep watch and make further researches, as he was unwilling to give up the search. The idea of the hundred pounds reward was a great excitement to exertion.

CHAPTER III.

KAKURRU.

AT break of day, Walker, accompanied by his prisoner and Mahong, had, as Mr. Powell desired, quitted the station. M'Donald seemed to submit to his fate with the greatest resignation. He rode the horse he had taken in exchange for his own. Walker consigned his saddle-bag and fire-arms to the care of the black soldier. His hands were still fettered, and a strong rope, tied to his horse's bridle and passed round the pommel of Walker's saddle, regulated the pace of his horse, and rendered every attempt at flight impossible; besides, what security could he have found in the bush unarmed, and with his hands bound?

The station was still and quiet when they left. One of the hut-keepers brought four horses out of a small paddock and commenced saddling them; M'Donald's gray was among the number.

Walker approached the man, who was gazing with astonishment and curiosity at the prisoner, and said:

"What do you want with these horses, my man, at so early an hour?"

"Master, sir," replied the man—"master, and Master George, and Master Ned, with Mr. Bale, are going into the bush to drive in horses for the Adelaide market."

"Oh, indeed! By-the-by, my man, if any of my fellows should pass this way, tell them they will find me at the next bend of the river. You understand me?"

"Ay, ay, sir; but—this is the way to Adelaide."

"I am not going to Adelaide. Don't forget the next bend."

"I shall not forget."

M'Donald cast an anxious glance at the hospitable house. He almost thought he saw one of the curtains moving—but perhaps he was mistaken; and, with a deep sigh, he turned his head, and forgetful of his fetters, pressed the flanks of his horse, which bounded forward. The rope checked it, and, chafing under the restraint, the animal pranced about with its master.

"Not so quick, sir," said Walker, quietly; "we must accustom our horses to a gentle pace. When we have gone some distance, we may, perhaps give them the reins."

"It is your right to order," gloomily replied the captive, riding in silence by the side of his keeper along the pretty, broad and sandy road. Mahong followed closely, in obedience to his master's orders, with strict instructions to fire at the prisoner if he made the slightest attempt to escape. Walker informed M'Donald of this order as soon as they had started.

When they reached the end of the station, where the bush commenced, Walker stopped the horses, turned round, and looked for a minute at the cluster of houses which lay peacefully in the light of the rising sun. Not a human being was to be seen, except the servant saddling the horses. On the bare sand-hill behind the buildings Nguyulloman sat, stirring his fire, which sent forth a thick black smoke, rising perpendicularly into the clear morning atmosphere.

"Forward!" said Walker, turning his horse. M'Donald obeyed the order. "It would have been better for both of us had we never seen the place!"

M'Donald turned quickly and cast an inquiring glance at Walker; but the young man let his head droop upon his breast, and gazed abstractedly upon the ground. He put his horse into a full trot, the prisoner followed, and they went at this pace until they had almost

reached the bend previously mentioned. Some horsemen were seen advancing in an opposite direction, and soon after the sergeant arrived, followed by six or eight of his men. On perceiving his lieutenant, Walker stopped in the middle of the road to wait for him.

"Mr. lieutenant," said the old soldier, with a military salute, "I have to report to you that—The devil!" he exclaimed, forgetting discipline and the service in his astonishment at seeing the stranger in irons; "Mr. M'Donald with her Majesty's handcuffs!"

The lieutenant remained silent for an instant, but a slight smile of triumph played upon his features, and, pointing to the prisoner, he said, with mock politeness:

"Cullock, I have the pleasure of introducing to you Mr. Jack Loudon."

"The deuce!" exclaimed the sergeant, while the blacks, who were still too far in the rear to catch the words, whispered among themselves on recognizing the stranger from the station. "Well, the expedition, after all, has not been in vain, and we have caught the chief bird!"

"Do you not wish to present me to your other men?" said M'Donald with a voice trembling with anger.

"It is not necessary at present," Walker quietly replied, "as I shall escort you myself to the nearest station; besides, Mahong, I see, has already done that."

Mahong had, indeed, joined his comrades for the purpose of making them acquainted with the importance of their capture; and the black fellows, rolling their large white eyes about, advanced to examine the white man more closely who had ventured so boldly into the midst of them after having so long escaped their vigilance.

"Get back!" shouted their officer, in anger.

"Sergeant, keep your troops in order; the fellows know as much of discipline as a flock of sheep."

"They are so much the better upon a track," said the sergeant, laughing; "and you should have seen how they followed the traces of Red John—one with his nose on the ground, like a hound on the scent of a fox, and the others at his heels, with the quickness of lightning. I cannot blame them for their curiosity to see the gentleman; and who knows whether the scrutiny may not be useful, for the gentleman does not look as if he were easy to keep?"

M'Donald bit his lip, but did not reply; and Walker, who wished to put a stop to this conversation, spurred his horse, and thus gave the signal for starting. The sergeant rode on his right side, while M'Donald was at his left, and the blacks followed about twenty paces in the rear. The sergeant now made a report with reference to the fruitless search, and declared his conviction that the wounded bush ranger had found a grave in the Murray, and was sticking fast in the branches of one of the numerous gum-trees in the bed of the river. But their leader concluded that the strong current might have swept these away, and he had no reason to believe that a renewed search would lead to any good results. "Besides," he added, "it must have rained higher up the river during the night, as it increased three inches in depth, and in some places overflowed its banks."

"The more reason, then, to continue our search, as soon as possible," replied the officer, riding toward the river, which was scarcely more than twenty paces distant from the path. "It appears to me that the water begins to look muddy. Therefore, avail yourselves of the present opportunity; search the other shore as far as the station, and, if you do not find anything, follow me this evening with your men. Mahong may go with you; he is one of the most expert; and I shall take one of the others with me as an escort. I shall remain at the next station until you bring me some intelligence. At any rate; if the water should rise rapidly, we shall be compelled to hasten to the police-station on the higher land."

The sergeant did not feel much inclined to renew the search; but the order was given, and he was bound to obey.

He kept his officer company for four or five miles, until they reached the place where Red John had crossed over; he then turned to the right with his men, and struck into the low swampy land of the bush, formed southward by a bend of the river. The lieutenant, attended by one of his men, went with his prisoner in the direction of the malley hills. The

soil consisted of hard red sand, scantily covered with wild oats and grass, and the horses went at a brisk pace.

They might have been riding thus for an hour, side by side, each occupied with his own thoughts, when a black was seen running across the path before them, and quickly disappearing among some tea-shrubs.

Walker pulled up suddenly, and the black riding behind him rose high in his stirrups, to watch the dark form as far as he could. Upon M'Donald this apparition made a strong impression. He fancied that, in the hairy upper body of the black, he recognized Kakurru.

When they arrived at the spot, where the black had crossed the path at one bound, they stopped; Walker's attendant dismounted, and, placing his head upon the ground, examined the track.

"That's of no use, my man," said his officer, laughing. "No doubt we came unexpectedly upon some black belonging to one of the neighboring tribes, and he scampered so fast to get out of our way. All these fellows have a bad conscience, and take to their heels as soon as they catch sight of our uniform."

The black did not seem to understand two words of his lieutenant's speech, but carefully examined the track. It was only when his officer had told him repeatedly to proceed, and not to trouble himself further about the matter, that he could be induced to desist. When he overtook the lieutenant, the latter wished to learn what he had discovered; but the poor devil did not understand a word of English, and clattered in his own dialect a long tale of which Walker, on his part, could not make out a syllable.

"A pretty business this!" he muttered to himself. "The sergeant has given me a man to whom I cannot even make myself understood."

"His communication is not of any consequence," said M'Donald, who had listened to the black with the greatest attention. "He only says he does not know the track, and believes the man belongs to another tribe."

"You speak the language of these people?" said Walker, quickly, with great astonishment.

"At any rate, I understand most of what they say."

"Very well," replied Walker, laughing. "Then, perhaps you will be so kind as to tell him to light a fire at the next turn in the river to which we come, that we may get a cup of tea. We have none of us had breakfast yet."

M'Donald translated this order to the black. The latter looked inquiringly at the officer, as if to receive confirmation, and, on seeing him nodding assent, he hastened forward to execute the same. The two horsemen followed the scarcely visible track left by a bullock-dray in the sand. Walker was silent, and lost in thought; but M'Donald's attention was excited to the utmost, and he moved along in almost breathless expectation. He had again observed the same black form close by the road-side, about a hundred paces in advance; and it was evident they were observed and followed by some native tribe. Whatever might be their intention, he must be a gainer. Death itself would have been more welcome to him than the prospect of a new imprisonment, more frightful than any he had before suffered. If he had seen aright, and if the strange visitant really was Kakurru, he had nothing to fear for his own safety; for that man was deeply indebted to him, and he hated the native police like death. With these impressions, he began fidgeting his hands, and this movement first attracted the attention of the officer to him.

"Do the handcuffs hurt you?" he asked, with greater kindness than M'Donald had expected, for he looked at his keeper with an expression of astonishment. The latter, however, recollecting, as it were, their mutual position, added in a much rougher manner—"Yes, they are an unpleasant thing to wear, these darbies; but I cannot take them off."

M'Donald did not reply; but, placing his hands upon the pommel of his saddle, he looked silently and gloomily before him. The officer suddenly stopped the horses, looked narrowly at his prisoner, and observed that he was watching him.

"Answer me one question, M'Donald," he said—"a question which I do not ask you as a lieutenant of the police, but as a man to a man."

"And what is that?" replied M'Donald, as a slight and bitter smile played about his lips.

"Simply this. Did you really intend, if you had not been discovered, to take a station here—to found a home—to—"

M'Donald scarcely paid any attention to what he said. His eyes were fixed with astonishment and surprise upon a dark form, no other than that of Kakurru, emerging from a wild salt-bush close behind the officer's horse, and swinging in the air one of those small Australian clubs, the so-called "waddy." Walker quickly followed the direction of his looks; but had scarcely turned his head, when the waddy, disappearing in the bush, came whirling the next instant, and striking the young officer upon the forehead, he fell senseless to the ground, as if hit by a bullet. With the rapidity of a kangaroo, the black rushed out and seized his weapon, and before M'Donald could quiet his horse, which had taken fright, he bent over the senseless body of the officer, and, with exultation, produced the key to the prisoner's handcuff.

"Kakurru, you have come at the right time!" shouted M'Donald joyfully; but the black, with a sign of his hand, advised him to be silent. He was not saved yet, as the soldier, who had gone on before them, might return at any moment. Moreover, the horse kept shying at the dark form of the black. M'Donald, laying his fettered hands on the pommel of his saddle, sprung to the ground, and held his arms, trembling with wild emotion, to the black. Three seconds after he was free.

"Now, then," said Kakurru, with a laugh; at the same time he bent over the prostrate body of the officer, and, seizing his waddy with a firmer grasp, exclaimed, "we had better make an end of him at once."

"Stop!" exclaimed M'Donald, interposing to prevent this deed. "No blood shall be shed save from necessity. Give me the handcuffs!"

A wild smile played on the countenance of the native.

"Also good," he said, perceiving the intention of M'Donald. "Turn the tables. Ha, ha, ha! how he will look when he recovers! Good! the white man may live; that is your affair, Jacky. You may do what you like with him, but the other is mine."

"What are you going to do?" exclaimed M'Donald, as Kakurru stepped up to the officer's horse, and took the carbine.

"What am I going to do?" repeated the black, with flashing eyes; "kill the black spy! A curse upon the dogs who turn traitors to their own tribe, track them, and give them up to the white men. Oh! that Kakurru could kill them all with one bullet! You secure this one, I shall take care of the other!"

Before M'Donald could answer a word he had disappeared in the thicket.

M'Donald had scarcely time to secure the hands of the prostrate man, and the irons had but just closed, when Walker, who was merely stunned, opened his eyes, and made a motion, as if about to jump up.

"What is this?" he exclaimed, on feeling his hands secured. "Mahong, rescue! Mahong!"

"Lieutenant Walker," said M'Donald, who had meantime taken the pistols out of the holsters, and went up with them toward the young man, "you see fortune has changed. Our parts are reversed, and you are in my power. Little as I wish to hurt you, you will, however, compel me to do so, for at the first shout you utter I will blow out your brains, or, worse still, leave you in the bush, bound and helpless as you are. Submit, therefore, to necessity. Providence, through the assistance of a faithful black, has made me free, and I am determined to preserve my freedom better than I have hitherto done."

"Treason!" said the officer, gnashing his teeth. "Think of what you are doing, before you dare to lay hands on one of her Majesty's officers."

"It certainly is a fearful crime," replied M'Donald, with a smile; "but, considering what I have already to answer for, I do not think it will matter very much."

Walker did not reply, but the anxious look he cast in the direction the black had taken, plainly showed that he expected help. Suddenly the report of a gun was heard in that direction, and M'Donald, listening for awhile, ran quickly to the officer's horse, replaced the left pistol in the holster, keeping the other in his hand, and vaulted into the saddle. At the same time, he unfastened the cord by which the horses were tied together.

"Your escape is hopeless!" exclaimed Walk-

er, in triumph. "Your black accomplice is by this time bathed in his blood; and, with my men upon your tracks, you cannot get away."

M'Donald gave no answer, and only looked attentively in the direction whence the report had been heard. At the same time, his teeth were firmly set together, his cheeks deadly pale, and he was evidently struggling with some wild, desperate prompting of his heart. Suddenly a dark form became visible; hoofs were heard, and Kakurru galloped up, shouting wildly, and triumphantly swinging the short carbine over his head, while with the waddy in his left hand he urged the horse to a quicker gallop. When he reached the two men, he stopped short and pulled his horse up, which obeyed its mad rider, snorting and puffing. The sight he presented was fearful. His black form shone with fat freshly rubbed on, and was streaked with blood. Fat even trickled from his hand and beard, and his eyes sparkled with exultation.

Walker concealed his face in his hand with an expression of horror, and even M'Donald turned away with a shudder. Both knew too well the habits of those wild tribes not to perceive at once that he had slain his antagonist, and anointed himself with the fat of his kidneys. Thereby these unfortunate men fancy the strength of their vanquished enemy is added to their own; and this ointment is, moreover, the greatest and most honorable sign of victory.

"That is the consequence," at last said M'Donald, after a short pause, "of your miserable system of setting black against black. The hatred of these unfortunate tribes is daily increased; their thirst for blood and their desire of revenge, however useful they may be to you now and then, often produce terrible consequences."

"And what do you intend doing with me, now?" asked Walker, gloomily; "I am in your power—what are your plans?"

"You are free," M'Donald answered, quickly, "as soon as you have pledged me your word of honor to allow me eight-and-forty hours' start. Afterward, you may pursue me in what way you like."

"Never will I make such a promise," exclaimed the officer, with firmness. "The moment that I am again free, I shall collect my men and be upon your tracks. It will become the aim of my life to secure you again."

"Then nothing remains for me to do," said M'Donald, shrugging his shoulders, "but to take you some distance,—at least out of immediate communication with your men."

"And if I do not follow you willingly?" asked the officer, proudly.

"You will compel me to use violence!" answered M'Donald, gravely. "I am driven to extremities; and between me and crime but a narrow and scarcely visible boundary-line exists; I wished to lead a steady, retired, honest life—to earn my bread by the sweat of my brow, and begin a new existence with a world which has ill-used me; even the recollection of everything that had passed was to be buried. Fate wills it otherwise, and I am firmly resolved to dare all. Condemned, although innocent, by a chain of circumstantial evidence; transported, ill-used by coarse overseers, and almost driven to madness, I took refuge in the bush. Hunted down, like a wild animal, I shall, if necessary, show my claws. You therefore, have your choice. Either follow me willingly, and consent to be deprived of your freedom for a few days, as I followed you—underwent once more the tortures of the prisoner, or your death shall answer for your silence. However," he added quickly, and in a more tranquil manner, "you perceive our mutual position too well for me to say a word about it. You know perfectly well that I cannot act differently, if I do not wish to fall again into your people's hands. Therefore, spare me the bitter necessity of committing a deed of violence."

With these words he turned away from the officer, to leave him to his own reflections, and went to his horse, to settle the bridle and saddle in order. He took his saddle bag and pistol, which hung on Kakurru's horse, and replaced them upon his own, as well as the carbine which the black had taken from his victim. He threw the line round the neck of the officer's horse, and beckoning his prisoner to follow his example, vaulted into the saddle.

Walker arose to comply with the order. "I only yield to force," he said, gloomily;

"and I give you my word that I shall devote my life to avenge this insult."

"That you know this life to be in my hands, and still dare to say so, shows more confidence in the bush ranger than the police usually are inclined to honor them with," said M'Donald with a smile. "But however that may be, I desire nothing from you; you may do your worst as soon as I have placed myself out of your reach. Now, mount, Mr. Walker; in the first place we will retrace our steps, and thus avoid the chance of falling in with your men. Will you go with me, Kakurru?"

The glossy black had in the mean time been examining the officer with a grim joy, only testified by his repeatedly and contentedly passing his hand over his fat-covered limbs. At this question he shook his head.

"Where to, Jacky?"

"Back and past the station," replied M'Donald, "and then toward the west."

"Certainly," replied the black, with sparkling eyes, "at least, as far as the houses of the white men. Much tea there to-day, and bread, and sugar, and tobacco."

"To-day?—there?" asked M'Donald, with surprise: "what do you mean?"

"We shall see," answered the black, as, upon a sign from M'Donald he took the officer's saddle-bag and placed it upon his own horse. Walker had by this time mounted and M'Donald, he guided the horses a little off the road into the bush, at the same time going in the direction of the station. But it was only when they reached the salt bushes and malley hills that he set spurs to his horse, and rode along much more quickly than they had done in the morning.

Kakurru kept at his side, pointing out the direction they were to take, and as they came nearer the station, went upon an old sheep-track which led into the malley hills. Under the protection of the hills they could easily ride round the station without being discovered. Several times Kakurru left the white men to follow their journey alone, riding, wherever the bush permitted, to the top of the hills, in order to gain a better view of the valley.

In this manner they had already crossed the road which led from the station to the Dry Swamp sheep-hut, when Kakurru, from a slight eminence to which he had ridden beckoned to them to follow. M'Donald and Walker at the time smelt smoke and saw a dark, thick cloud wafted toward them from that direction. In a few seconds they were at the side of the black, and could not suppress an exclamation of astonishment and dismay at seeing thick clouds of smoke rising from the buildings, the situation of which they both well knew.

"Good God! what is this?" exclaimed M'Donald, horror-stricken: "why, the station is on fire."

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Kakurru. "Do you think that the black men will allow their blood to be shed and their young men to be shot down unavenged, like the dingoes? If you have the gun and long knife, the black has the spear and firebrand, and knows how to use them. Nguyulloman gave the signal that the white men had left the station, and now it is time to seize and carry off to the mountains tobacco, flour, and sugar. Just follow the direction you have taken, Jack; Kakurru is going there to get his share, and will then come after you."

"For God's sake, tell me what is going on!" exclaimed Walker, who did not understand a word of the information given by the native.

"The most horrible calamity!" M'Donald exclaimed, in fearful excitement and anxiety. "The men quitted the station, leaving the treacherous black cripple there as a spy; and he has given the signal, and the blacks are burning and plundering everything; perhaps murdering those who may fall alive into their hands."

"And I am powerless!" exclaimed Walker, gnashing his teeth in wild, useless frenzy. "Man—devil!—can you look on quietly when—"

"Stop," said M'Donald, firmly. "In this case my own life and safety are of no consequence. Do your worst after this: do, in fact, with me what you will, you are free and perhaps we shall be able yet to rescue those unfortunate people from the worst fate. Here," he said, as with hands trembling with eagerness and emotion he approached the officer, searching his pockets for the key of the handcuffs, "for God's sake be quick, for every

moment's delay may bring death and misery upon the head of those who are dear to us."

"What are you going to do, Jacky?" exclaimed Kakurru, rushing between them, his eye darting fire and rage, and looking like a demon escaped from hell. "You will help the white men? You will fight against the blacks? Is it for that I have freed you?"

"Black Kakurru!" shouted M'Donald, "you mistook when you thought I should assist you in plundering and murdering. Back! or by the eternal God—"

"White dog," roared the black, with unrestrained fury, swinging his short, heavy waddy round his head, taking aim at the white man's forehead. The blow was given with such force that it must have inevitably fractured the skull of the victim, if M'Donald had not warded it off with his left arm. He seized his foe in his iron grasp and hurled him aside, while with his right hand he drew a pistol and presented it at the breast of his antagonist.

Kakurru's arm moved as if he were about to hurl his weapon, but the pistol frightened him. He turned his horse's head, and raising his arm in an attitude of menace against the white men, disappeared down the steep hill.

M'Donald did not even look after him. As soon as his attack was averted, all his thoughts and attention were directed to the rescue of those who were in danger. With the small key he unlocked the irons, which he took and hurled into the bush, and giving the officer his pistol, he shouted with a hoarse voice, stifled with alarm: "Now, forward, sir, forward, for Heaven's sake!"

Having severed the cord by which Walker's horse was still attached to his own, and putting spurs to his animal, he bounded, followed by his companion, down the hill, toward the salt-bush plain, and across it in the direction in which the smoke showed him but too plainly where assistance was needed.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BLACK CRIPPLE.

THE station, that usually presented so lively and animated an appearance, was still and lonely on that morning, when its owner, to dissipate the sad thoughts that still filled his heart respecting the scenes of the previous evening, mounted his horse, and, accompanied by his sons and his stock-keepers, rode out into the bush to drive in a herd of horses. Bill and one hut-keeper stayed behind with the women, as the other hut-keeper had to be sent to the out-station to fill the place rendered vacant by Toby's flight. No one thought of danger, particularly as the black police were still in the neighborhood, and the natives usually left that part of the country where this much-dreaded force happened to be. As for the black cripple, whom, during the last few days, they had loaded with kindness, he could surely do them no harm. Indeed, he seemed to trouble himself but little about any one, and was only busy stirring and blowing his fire. His little attendant had to take him quantities of wood and bark. The white men had scarcely left the station, and disappeared among the malley-hills, when he separated his fire into three heaps, about six feet apart, and, as the flame burst high in the air, smothered it with rotten wook and damp bark, until out of each there rose a thin column of smoke.

No one at the station noticed his movements. The hut-keeper alone watched his doings with astonishment, and felt inclined to go and ask him whether he intended to exhaust his supply of wood at once. The waste of wood interested him, inasmuch as he had to get the supplies of that article for the kitchen and the house; and on that account, the wood-destroying blacks, who got everything they could lay their hands upon to burn, had long excited his anger. In order to make inquiries, he would have been obliged to go up the sand hill, and as he was freed from every responsibility in the matter, he considered it too irksome. So comfortably stretched out before his hut, he watched the cripple's strange proceedings until his eyelids grew heavy. How long he had been lying thus he did not himself know, when he was suddenly aroused by loud, boisterous cries. He started up, half-frightened, thinking his master had returned, when he suddenly perceived a troop of blacks armed with spears, descending from the hill upon which Nguyulloman was still sitting between his fires, and advancing straight toward him.

"Has the devil brought these dark-skinned rascals back again?" muttered he to himself.

"I supposed they liked the mutton; but I'll be hanged if they get as much as a bone from me. If master is willing to feed these black dogs he may do so, but I'll have nothing to do with it."

The blacks—eight men—some of them were painted red and white—in the mean time approached him without much ceremony, and one of them walked up to him and said in his horrible broken English:

"Come, give tobacco and flour—quick! I flour-bag money, much—quick!"

"You white money?" said the hut-keeper, a testy, sour old fellow, who had been liberated several years before with a ticket-of-leave. "You look as if you carried white money about in your cheek pouches. We don't sell anything here. Master is not at home; when he returns, you may buy."

"You—quick!" said the black, pushing the hut-keeper by the shoulder; "quick—you hear?"

"Zounds!" shouted the latter, in the greatest passion; "touch me again, and I'll blow out the brains of every one of you!"

He had not time to utter another word; one of the blacks struck him with a waddy upon his head, and he fell, senseless, to the ground. The others thrust their spears into his body with wild cries of triumph. This was the signal for a general assault; and from three or four different sides the various bands emerged. The greater part of them rushed to the well-known storehouse and broke open the door, while about eight or nine directed their steps toward the house.

Sarah was standing at the window, gazing sadly and silently at the river, when the first noise attracted her attention. The thought of this sudden danger shot through her heart like ice; for even the possibility of an attack from the blacks had always frightened the ladies, and even imbibed many a joyful hour. And now, all this was a fearful reality. Bill's voice first brought her to herself.

The boy had seen the blacks descending the hill, and was just on the point, in his bold way, of stepping out to support the hut-keeper, when the murder of this unfortunate man showed him the impending and rapidly-approaching danger. However, cool and collected beyond his years, he soon made up his mind—locked the door, barred it, and told his sisters to shut the lower shutters, while he ran up with a gun to resist the first attack from that position. It was indeed high time that something was done. The vanguard of the band were already running round the small dwelling-house, endeavoring to find an entrance somewhere, while the remainder were plundering the stores. Bill, armed with his double-barreled gun, stepped to the window, and, without a moment's hesitation, shot one of the fiercest of the band.

The shot was fired in the very nick of time. These savages have a peculiar dread of firearms, and all of them sought to place themselves as quickly as possible out of the reach of the deadly weapon. The women, half dead with fear and terror, thus gained time to close the shutters of the ground floor, through which the blacks would otherwise easily have made their way; and Sarah gave her brother the other guns, which were always kept loaded in one of the rooms.

"The shot has driven the rascals back," exclaimed Bill, with exultation, "and our friends must hear it. If we can only maintain our ground for half an hour, we are sure to receive aid."

"We are lost!" said Sarah, sinking down upon a chair. "Good God! No help at hand—the whole station deserted. All—all away!"

"If I only had George and Mr. Bale or M'Donald here," muttered Bill. "It would be the finest fun—how we should pepper the black rascals! There is another looking up. Just show your black hide a little, my fine fellow, and I will settle your account."

"Oh, do not fire unless you are forced," cried Sarah; "you will only exasperate them the more."

"Exasperate!" repeated Bill. "They have smelt blood, and will do their worst, anyhow. Take this gun, Sarah, and fire it off out of one of the other windows."

"I cannot commit murder," said Sarah. "Nonsense," exclaimed the boy, angrily; "to-day we have no time for scruples—our blood or theirs. But, if you like, fire into the air, or in the direction of the storehouse. When they hear firing from two different sides, they will suppose that we are stronger than we

really are, and perhaps our people in the bush may hear us."

Sarah did as her brother desired. She had learned, during the years she had passed in the bush, how to handle a gun. But the blacks seemed to have given up their attack upon the house, and to be satisfied with plundering the storehouses, which Bill, naturally enough, could not prevent. The old men of the tribe did not, however, merely desire the booty, which they obtained so easily—they longed for vengeance for the blood that had been spilled. While half of the troop carried off the booty, others brought firebrands into the kitchen adjoining the house and set it on fire. Protected by the roof of the kitchen they advanced toward the door leading into the house, and tried to break it open, when Bill hastened down-stairs, and fired his gun through the panel.

Unfortunately, the blacks had by this time discovered how weak the garrison was; and although Bill discharged all the guns from the different windows of the upper stories, they were not intimidated. A few of the enemies, protected by the smoke, had already taken the house in the rear, and, with the handles of their short waddies, were endeavoring to break open the shutters. Firebrands had also been thrown into the dwelling-houses of the two stock-keepers, whence the flames were already bursting forth, while the flames from the kitchen had reached the rafters of the house.

Bill perceived the danger in which they were placed, and was well aware that no mercy could be expected from their bloodthirsty enemies. The conviction that he was the only protector of his mother and sisters, endowed the boy with almost supernatural strength, and filled his young heart with wonderful coolness and enthusiasm. Calm as a veteran grown old in combats, he reloaded the guns, and ordered his sisters, who obeyed his commands implicitly, to take their mother into the corner room of the lower story, which was most distant from the fire, and whence, if things should come to the worst, they might at least gain the yard. Once outside, there was nothing left for him to do but to keep the savages at such a distance with his fire-arms that their spears could not reach them. At any rate, help must soon arrive.

At that moment one of the shutters fell in with a crash, broken in shivers by two of the most daring blacks. They had made their way through the opening, and, as Bill hastened to the spot, the wild yell of triumph of other enemies resounded from the back building. Two spears—he did not even perceive by whom they were thrown—pierced at the same time his coat and left arm, and the next instant five blacks rushed in from opposite sides, and with demoniacal yells seized the ladies. Bill discharged his gun into the midst of them, and a shot was heard from the outside.

"Help!" resounded the terrified cry of 'Lisbeth, in the midst of the tumult, as one of the blacks seized her and dragged her to the door, which had been burst open. Sarah was struggling with another; and as their mother lay insensible upon the ground, another shot resounded in the midst of this terrible noise and confusion, and Bill thought he saw, through the smoke, the forms of Walker and M'Donald battling with the blacks. But at this moment a boomerang hit him on the brow, stretching him insensible upon the ground.

"Hurrah! to the rescue!" M'Donald's full, powerful voice thundered above the howl of the blacks, who in their panic left the booty they had already seized, and, at this unexpected reinforcement, fled in all directions. They had recognized the much-dreaded uniform of the chief of the black police, and imagined that they were surrounded and must be taken prisoners.

"Out of the house!" shouted Walker, to the ladies, without even bestowing a look on the black who had seized 'Lisbeth, and whom he had felled to the ground with a blow of the butt end of his pistol. "The house is on fire; save yourself!" and with his strong arm he lifted the old lady, who was still insensible, and rushed out with her. M'Donald, carrying the boy, followed him. They had, however, scarcely reached the open space in front of the house, when they perceived a troop of blacks, led by Kakurru, advancing to the attack. The wild yells and howls of the infuriated savages filled the air, and spears, fortunately badly aimed in their blind rage, flew in all directions.

"Now is the time, M'Donald!" exclaimed Walker, mingling in the fight with wild enthusiasm. "Two against twenty, that's fair odds against these black dogs. Hurrah! Old England forever!"

With these words, he threw his useless pistol into the midst of the troop, and drawing his sword, rushed upon the enemy.

M'Donald, holding a pistol in his left hand, and a long, heavy knife in his right, kept close to Walker's side. Kakurru confronted Walker, who, with one blow of his sword, split the black's skull. But his comrades were still pressing forward with wild yells. They knew they had the advantage of numbers, saw victory certain, and the blood which had been shed had driven them into a wild and desperate rage. Their battle-cry resounded in the air, their spears and boomerangs fell in showers, and Walker tottered on, receiving a blow from one of the latter.

"Hurrah!" resounded in the midst of the noise and tumult of the fight; "here, my boys, at them!" and with a flying leap over the fence, discharging his pistol into the midst of the troop, and mowing the affrighted blacks down right and left from his horse, like God's wrath, the sergeant came rushing on, followed by four or five of his men. Like spray before the wind, the black foes scattered in all directions.

"Hurrah," shouted the old soldier, giving the spurs to his foaming steed, and with every blow of his sharp weapon he struck one of the fugitives to the ground. "Hurrah, tally-ho!—at them! at them! Hurrah! you rascals, we've caught you!—hurrah!"

The flight of the blacks was general. The greater portion of their troop had already made off with the booty, leaving the destruction of the whites to a small number of their young men. Those who could save themselves from the unexpected attacks of the old sergeant and the black soldiers, who followed them like the impersonification of revenge, fled, some into the malley-bushes, some to the river, into which they dived, to get out of the reach of danger.

Walker not taking time to look after his horse, pursued the fugitives on foot, but M'Donald, as soon as the ladies were out of danger, ran hastily to his animal, which he had left at the fence, put his discharged pistols into the holsters, and vaulted into the saddle. He cast one more look at the fight, which was still raging, and with a quick pressure of his knee, led the horse toward the ladies. When Sarah heard the sound of hoofs behind her, she turned her head.

"M'Donald!" she exclaimed, on recognizing the horseman.

"God bless you, and yours!" said the young man, bending over her in a friendly manner. The next instant his horse bounded toward the fence, which he took at a flying leap, and galloped away across the country.

"The devil," exclaimed the sergeant, who had just turned his horse round, and was standing by his officer. "There goes our bush ranger at full speed into the bush. After him, my boys, before he has passed the first malley-hill."

"Stop!" said Walker, coolly and firmly; "the blacks are there; let some of the men pursue them, while the others save what can be snatched out of the flames. But at the same time secure the black cripple, who is just creeping down the sand-hill toward the river. He is the spy of the band, and betrayed the place to them."

The sergeant looked somewhat astonished at his lieutenant. Moreover, he did not understand how his officer and his prisoner, whom he thought many miles away, had so suddenly returned to the station, and what had brought them back at the very nick of time. In his opinion, the capture of the bush ranger was much more important than the punishment of twenty troublesome blacks; however, he had to obey his superior's orders. A few soldiers were at once told to follow the enemy into the bush, and, if possible, to make some prisoners, while the sergeant, accompanied by one of his men, for how could he want more to secure a cripple? galloped toward the hill.

Nguyulloman, who had in the mean time been a most attentive and interested spectator of the events of the morning, bad, with increasing uneasiness, seen the gradual arrival of reinforcements at the station, and the flight and defeat of his comrades.

However, he would keep his ground. No

one would, he thought, know what an important part he had acted in the unlucky transaction; and, if he remained perfectly quiet, the white men would do him no harm. After a few days, or when it grew dark, it would be easy for him to withdraw.

At the same time, however, he felt considerable uneasiness at the presence of the mounted blacks, who were being continually reinforced, and kept galloping about, until, with the exception of a few, the whole troop were assembled again on the station. He was just as little pleased with the attention which the officer, upon whom he kept his eyes, bestowed upon him, and he was creeping slowly down the hill toward the river, on his hands, when the sergeant cut off his retreat.

"Hallo! my old cross spider!" the rough soldier shouted out to him; "on the retreat for some hole along the shore, eh? But you will not be able to give signals so easily down there. Wait, my hearty, we'll look out for a high, airy place for you on a tree, where you will be able to make signals, with hand and foot, to your heart's content. Stop, I say, else I shall mark your black skin with red streaks—do you hear?"

Nguyulloman understood but too well every word thundered forth by the sergeant, and found, to his horror, that either he must have been betrayed, or that the white men suspected the part he had acted. Either alternative was a dangerous one for him. But, however he might secretly gnash with his teeth, and crush the sand between his fingers, he could not defend himself against his enemies—could not even attempt to escape; a child would have overtaken him in the soft, yielding sand. Wriggling before the soldier like a worm, he said, in a whining, entreating tone, and in an English which, although broken, was perfectly intelligible:

"Do not hurt a poor cripple. What do you want with me? Can I, a poor unfortunate, do any one harm? All have forsaken me, even my boy, who has hitherto fetched me water and wood, and, dying with thirst, I was just creeping to the river."

"What a wretched image of man that is!" the sergeant muttered, as he examined the miserable being; "and such a venomous toad into the bargain. But wait, my boy; we'll cure you of these freaks."

"Water!" groaned the wretch, at the same time stretching the fleshless, skeleton-like legs from him, as if in suffering and agony.

"Hang it!" exclaimed the sergeant, turning from the loathsome form in disgust; "get him some water, Kaieko. It makes one feel sick to look at his spider's legs."

"Water!" groaned the wretch; and moved painfully and slowly after the soldier, who broke a piece of bark from the nearest gum-tree, and was running with it to the river to get water. The cripple kept moving like a lame toad through the sand toward the water, and his wide-open lips already seemed to touch the longed-for draught. Kaieko was obliged to run about fifty paces down the shore, to find a place where he could get at the stream. To this place, however, the cripple kept advancing, as if the mere sight of water was a relief to him, while the sergeant watched his motions with horror and curiosity. He at the same time sheathed his sword; and, as Kaieko was returning with the water, dismounted from his horse, and threw his bridle over its neck.

Nguyulloman was about ten paces from the steep shore, and looked round to the white man as if for assistance. Again he stretched out his long, fleshless legs, and his countenance became distorted, his eyes fixed.

"May I become a black, if that is not the most horrible thing I have seen in the whole course of my life!" said the old soldier, turning away in disgust from the hideous form, when the latter, as if with a convulsive start, jumped into the air, and neared the river by at least two paces.

"Take care, you will fall into the river," cried the sergeant. "I say—hallo! what is that? The devil—the beast!"

He had cause to be astonished; for, suddenly, like a gigantic spider, throwing out his thin legs and dragging them along, placing his outspread hands on the soil, which was firmer here, the cripple drew his black body along with incredible rapidity over the ground toward the steep shore.

"Stop, there!" shouted the soldier, trying to cut off his retreat; but, like a ball of india-rubber, the black body leaped over the few

paces that still separated it from the river, and before the sergeant could lay hold of the black lump, which had suddenly gained such a rapid motion—nay, before he could make up his mind what to do—the earth had crumbled away from the steep and soft brink of the shore, and, with it, the black rolled into the waves.

Kaieko, who had been sent for the water, altogether mistrusting the old fellow, had noticed his first movement. He returned, therefore, quicker than he went; and, as the black form commenced bounding over the ground, he threw away the water, and, without further ado, took his carbine from off his shoulder. At the same moment the black mass rolled down the bank, and, as the black soldier ran toward him, the sergeant shouted to him:

"Let him alone, Kaieko; he will be food for the fish, and it is quite indifferent to us whether he is hanged or drowned."

"Nguyulloman drowned!" exclaimed Kaieko, holding his musket in readiness, and with flashing eyes watching the waves, to fire at him as soon as he should reappear; "the fish and lobsters of the Murray will drown as soon as the black sorcerer who cast a charm over my father and brother. If he shows but a hair—"

He checked himself suddenly, and put the carbine to his shoulder; for the dark head with the flashing eyes had just emerged above, higher up the current. He disappeared with the flash and report of the gun to come to the surface again immediately a few paces below. Like a gigantic frog, he swam two or three strokes against the current, while the legs, stretched out behind him, floated entirely on the surface. But, with his head turned cautiously round, he watched every movement of his enemies: and the sergeant had only time to seize his pistols when he disappeared again like a widgeon in the river.

The white man was still looking in the same direction watching for the reappearance of the black, when the soldier at his side took hold of his arm and pointed down the river, about a hundred paces from them. Nguyulloman's wild features were seen there above the surface of the water, only to disappear again as quickly. They now waited in vain to see him come up again; he remained invisible. Near the branch of a tree, that had fallen into the river, with his mouth and nose only above the surface, the savage was lying concealed, entirely covered by the wood, and it was only when he had quite rested himself and recovered his breath, and was no longer observed by his enemies, that he swam down with the current.

The black police, had meanwhile, under the direction of Walker, stopped the progress of the fire, and saved some of the furniture, when Mr. Powell, with his sons and stock-keepers, came at full speed, on their foaming horses.

"There is your father," said Walker, approaching the ladies who were busily engaged attending their brother, who had just recovered his senses. "You no longer have anything to fear. Besides, six of my men can remain here to assist you, and I myself shall not leave the country before I have driven this treacherous tribe out of your neighborhood, and punished them for the deed. You may sleep in peace."

He went to his horse, which one of his men brought to him, and jumped into the saddle.

"You are going to leave us!" exclaimed Mrs. Powell, stretching out her hand toward him. "Oh, do not run away so soon."

"We should have been lost had it not been for you," said Lisbeth, with her eyes full of tears.

"Your gratitude I must share with another," said Walker, sadly, avoiding the scrutinizing glance which Sarah fixed on him; "but," he added quickly, and with peculiar emphasis, "I have now other duties to perform. I must first pursue the most dangerous banditti, recapture their booty, and rid the country of the blacks. Should you, in the mean time, think of me now and then, let it not be with hate."

"Mr. Walker!" cried Sarah, in tones of entreaty.

Walker waved his hand, as he put his spurs to his horse. The owner of the station came in at one side, and he left it at the other, paying no heed whatever to the shouts of the old gentleman. Walker hastily assembled a few of his men, and rode with them into the bush.

CHAPTER V.

THE BUSH TAVERN.

At a strange bend in the Murray, the river,

that had previously flowed to the westward, changed its course, and went straight to the south, pursuing that direction to the end. Near this bend, in a district which the natives called Kullangany, stood a small insignificant bark shanty, the owner of which seemed to be something between a squatter and farmer. He might be called a squatter inasmuch as he rented from government pasture-grounds, of no great extent, upon which he kept a few thousand sheep, about fifty head of cattle, and ten or twelve horses—a farmer, inasmuch as he had purchased, close to the river, and at a pretty good landing-place, about four or five acres of land, on which he made the attempt—which could scarcely be considered a serious one—of growing vegetables and corn.

In those parts the banks of the Murray are of a very peculiar nature, and of an entirely different character from those below the Bomin Lake. Flat and clayey in the latter place, they are steep and precipitous in the former. Walls of limestone, frequently interspersed with the most remarkable shell fossils, rise perpendicularly to the height of several hundred feet out of the bed of the river, inclosing on an average, a narrow valley of from four to twelve hundred paces in breadth, over the gray clayey soil of which the river meanders, in some parts two hundred paces broad. This valley is extremely fertile, and would produce the most splendid crops, if the good land were not, almost without exception, exposed to inundation from the river. Almost every year, and just at the harvest time, the Murray overflows its banks, and prevents the farmer from securing his harvest. On one of these M'Pherson had laid out what might be called a garden. His estate comprised about five acres, on which he cultivated some wheat and potatoes and other vegetables. His principal trade was, however, the sale of spirituous liquors, and most of the laboring men of the Murray Valley who passed his house were his customers. It is true, that sometimes for weeks he did not sell one shilling's worth; but the next troop of bundlemen, who carried their year's wages in their pockets, richly compensated him for such a season of inactivity. Then the ordinarily quiet shanty in the bush was filled with wild, boisterous merriment, tumult, and fighting, and all the passions which gambling and brandy can call forth.

The life of these bushmen is, indeed, a strange one. Nearly all the year they live with as few wants as an Indian, dragging on their hard, joyless existence in work, or in the occupation of a shepherd, or stock-keeper. During this time they never see money, and rarely taste spirituous liquors, until at last, at the expiration of their twelve months, they are paid their wages, and hasten to the nearest grog-shop, not to enjoy their hard earned gains, but to drink them out in the shortest possible time.

The Australian bushman has no such excuse for this. On the contrary, a few years' saving would easily enable him to commence life upon his own account, acquire some property, and place himself in an independent position. He knows he can get safe investment for his money—knows it would bring him good interest, and knows that, as long as he remains a common laboring man, he will always lead at the bush a miserable and dependent life.

But in spite of all this, he tries, with a sort of feverish anxiety, to get rid of the only thing which could help him to an independent position—ready money. He squanders his hard-earned gains without even receiving in exchange a single enjoyment, unless we consider as such, that of acting the "swell," for a few days, scattering his gold about him, and plying his body with copious draughts of spirituous, and mostly adulterated liquors. Then follow a few days of wretchedness, until his stomach and head have recovered from such indulgence. Without a penny in his pocket—nay, perhaps without a pocket to put a penny in if he had one—it is by no means an uncommon occurrence to see them selling their very clothes off their backs in order to prolong the half-conscious state for a few hours. Then he sneaks back into the bush, and goes through another year's hard work to purchase such another week.

M'Pherson kept one of these bush taverns, provided not only with the common bad brandy and gin, but with all sorts of—at least differently ticketed—wines, and even imitations of champagne. Although but few guests had visited his house during the last three weeks,

the chance of more custom at last cheered his spirits.

Seven or eight bushmen, having their year's wages, partly in cash, partly in paper, in their pockets, arrived at his house, and had taken up their quarters with him. They inaugurated their "freedom" by reclining comfortably under a tree, around a bottle of brandy. Their destination was Adelaide, and they only intended to make this a halting-place for a short time. To-day was to be a day of rest, consequently they did not intend to get drunk; and on the following morning, at break of day, they proposed to set off for the distant capital of the district, where they resolved to commence their carousals in good earnest. However, M'Pherson was of a very different opinion upon this subject.

These men were the roughest and wildest of their class, such as the earlier English system of transportation brought together only in this part of the world. Physiognomies seen at the gallows and in jails. Men who had led a life of crime, without any hope in the future, intent only on satisfying the present; their language was one prolonged curse—continual blasphemy.

With one exception, these fellows were old convicts. Among themselves, they considered it as a matter perfectly understood, and would have thought it highly ridiculous in any of them to wish to deny it. M'Pherson himself coquetted with his "olden times," and, as he sat down by them, had to tell them lots of anecdotes of this or that magistrate, this or that "old cove," which all dated back to the times when free emigrants were among the natural curiosities of Australia.

The ill-treatment of the convicts in early times, induced them to endeavor to outwit the officials. Their conversation naturally turned upon the present; and the news that the native mountain police of New South Wales were now on the borders of the Adelaide district especially attracted their attention.

"Hang the black dogs," said Bob, a bullock-driver; "is it right to use these blacks as blood-hounds, to catch a poor fellow who has made his escape, or to kill him in the bush like a wild dog?"

"These are all new-fangled inventions," answered Dick, a shepherd. "Why, they have even sent us a priest to our station."

All burst out into a violent shout of laughter.

"Nonsense," cried Jack, another shepherd, who came from the same station as Dick: "don't trouble your head with these old stories, especially as we are sitting round the same bottle of brandy."

"And a precious shame it is," said M'Pherson, laughing, "that we have but one!"

"Well, then, make it two if you like," said Bob. "We want our money, and cannot leave it here in the bush. I say, my boys, we'll let the 'swells' of Adelaide see what we can do, and show them that we are at home there as well as in the bush."

"Pooh! your money!" exclaimed M'Pherson, contemptuously, and with an oath that would not have shamed the bullock-driver; "who spoke of your money? If I offer you a glass, you don't fancy I wish you to pay for it? But, my boys, I have got some good peach brandy, soft as butter and fiery as—"

"Hang your comparisons," exclaimed Bob, impatiently, "bring us the stuff, that's the main point; we'll soon make the comparisons ourselves. What have we to pay for this bottle?"

"Plenty of time," said M'Pherson, hurrying into the house; "try the other first."

"Have you seen the black police, Mac?" asked Bob, when the host had gone. "Curse the fellows, they have not passed this way."

"Oh, no, they went through the bush," replied Mac, while the others listened with much interest. "I think they were on the tracks of a couple of 'old coves' who had 'planted' somewhere about here. One of these blackamoors came to the North-west Bend, and sent another of them away to fetch the frontier police of South Australia to their aid."

"Just what I imagined," said Dick, with an oath, striking the ground with his fist. "These fellows have been trying to make the country unsafe. There is not a hut but they creep into it, asking to see every man's pass, and we shall at last have to tell them where we got the coat upon our back. I wish they were at the devil."

"Red John is up in that direction," whispered Mac to his companion, as if afraid lest the host should hear him.

"The devil!" exclaimed Dick, "you don't say so?—Well, he is a fellow of the right sort. But if he once has the blacks at his heels, he won't long eat damper in the bush."

"Let him alone for that," said Bob, laughing; "he is the boy. But you need not speak so low, M'Pherson won't peach."

"The deuce trust the innkeepers," muttered Mac; "they peach or don't peach, just as it suits them best. If Red John came here with his pockets full of cash, the devil a word would M'Pherson peach against him. But if he had nothing but the price set upon his head, he would not require to be asked twice; nay, he would himself assist in putting the 'darbies' round his wrists."

"Well, it must be rather pleasant to have a reward like that placed upon one's head," said Mike, a ration-carrier at one of the neighboring stations.

The sixth member of the party was a young fellow of the name of Ralph, not quite so rough as the rest, although life in the bush had given him a sufficiently wild appearance to render him by no means out of his place in the company in which he found himself. It was very possible that he had not been transported, and was a free emigrant, with an honest life to look back upon; but if such was the case, he carefully concealed the fact, and mentioned nothing of the sort before his older companions, whose experience he held in the greatest respect. However, he did not seem to understand Mike's observations, and he broke silence by saying:

"After all, it must be a fearful feeling to know that one's name is in the papers, and that everybody has the right to arrest you and give you up to justice."

"Now, d—n it!" said Mike, laughing, and striking his broad fist in his open palm, "ain't he green? Why, my good fellow, how long have you been in Australia? Upon my word, I begin to think the fool paid his passage over."

"Bah!" exclaimed Ralph, blushing at the suspicion of being a free emigrant, "my mother's son has more sense than to pay for his passage, when her Majesty's ships bring folks over for nothing."

"God bless her Majesty!" exclaimed M'Pherson, just returning with a full bottle, and understanding something of the last speech. "Will no one pledge me?"

"We have nothing to say against her Majesty," growled Bob; "we once had a free passage. Give us something worth the trouble and we will pledge you."

"Hang it, the brandy is really good!" was now the general exclamation. "Famous stuff, this! Where did you get it, mate?"

"Where? Direct from France," answered his smirking host. "It is a lucky thing to have friends at the port, who can land a cargo of something wet without much bother. The day before yesterday I had a whole cargo of three or four different sorts of brandy, a cask of Scotch whisky, three or four kinds of wine, port, sherry, porter, and half a dozen baskets of the real 'Swell's' tipple (champagne). It cracks like a cannon, and throws bubbles and foam like a thousand-ton steamer."

"Hallo, Mac! we have come at the right time, I see!" exclaimed Dick, laughing. "I'll be hanged if I go away before I have tasted at least a little of everything. We shall have plenty of time to go to Adelaide; and after all, we might leave the good stuff behind us here, and drink whatever they think fit to give us."

"Yes; but I know this much," answered Jack, shaking his head: "if we once begin here, we shall never get any further: we shall not even see the mountains. Of course you may do as you like. I must go to the settlements whether you go with me or not; and at least I'll take good care of my wits. You may do what you please."

"Thanks, my boy," said Mike; "you are deuced kind, indeed, to give us leave to do as we choose. Well, what's the matter with M'Pherson, making a grimace as if he had invented a new sort of handcuffs, or a model prison with a reformatory! Well, what's up, my buck? A screw loose somewhere."

"Do you know?" whispered the host to Bob, who was sitting next to him—

"Well, what? That they'll soon settle your sly grog-shop, eh? One needn't be a prophet to perceive that."

"Don't speak of the devil, boys, and don't shout so loud," replied M'Pherson, looking about him uneasily, as if he was afraid to be heard even in the midst of this wilderness. "Who

do you think is somewhere about here in the bush?"

"Well, you old owl, who is it?" asked Bob, laughing; "his Excellency the Governor?"

"Nonsense," answered the host, angrily; "Jack Loudon!"

"Well!" said Bob, quietly.

"Well!" repeated M'Pherson, with astonishment; "Jack Loudon, the celebrated bush ranger!"

"Celebrated?" answered Bob, with a contemptuous sneer. "Who made him celebrated, I should like to know?"

"Who? The Governor. Are not there £100 set upon his head?"

"It would be worth the trouble indeed to catch him," said the bullock-driver, with a shrug of the shoulders. "I have it from people who must know better than anybody else, that Jack Loudon is as much fit to be a bush ranger as Ralph there, and he wouldn't be worth five pounds."

The others laughed; but M'Pherson, who would not permit any one to underrate the importance of his news, said angrily:

"Well, I suppose you must know better than the police. When they offer so much money, you may be pretty certain they know what they are about."

"The police, if you have no objection," said Mike, gravely, "may go to grass. Red John has been all his life a better bush ranger than Jack Loudon. 'Live with the wolves, and not bowl with them,' is his motto. Steal a horse like a man, and pay for it like a booby! Bah! so much for him! Why, did he even strike a single blow at the mail business? On the contrary, he shot fat Pad down because he wanted to get somewhat better acquainted with the pretty girl in the chaise. Such a two-faced rascal may go to the devil, for my part; and if they caught him, and hanged him, I would drink a bottle to the health of the sheriff, I'll be hanged if I wouldn't! No; Red John is another sort of a fellow, and worth five thousand pounds, if they offer one hundred for Jack Loudon."

"Hallo, mate! you talk as if you knew them both!" said M'Pherson, laughing.

"Bah!" cried Bob, with a shake of the head; "those times are gone. The bush is too dry, and there are rascally spies sitting at every corner. There's no more fun in the business; and then, it is more fit for young people. When one grows old, one likes to earn so much a year in a safe manner, instead of being hunted like a dingo. Since I got my pass, I thrash bullocks instead of the police, and don't wish to hear anything more of the concern."

"And with that he is emptying the whole bottle," exclaimed Mac. "Come, mate, that's not sharing fairly."

"What say you, lads, to another bottle of the same stuff?" exclaimed Ralph. "I'll pay for it."

"Bravo, mate! There is something in the fellow after all," said Dick, laughing.

"But that must be the last bottle," expostulated Jack. "We'll drink the rest in Adelaide, or call here for it on our return."

"Ah, ah, I thought you were going to run all the way to Adelaide without stopping," said Ralph, laughing; "but here's M'Pherson coming back already. He must have had the bottle behind the door."

"He is an old fox," muttered Bob; "but I have some notion he'll find he is mistaken this time."

But M'Pherson was not mistaken, and he knew his men better than they probably knew themselves. He sought to entice them gradually to drink; treated them to a small cask of anchovies, which he brought out and served up with toasted damper, and at last they agreed not to leave his house that day. More he did not want; he knew perfectly well that after that they would not go away as long as their money lasted.

Drinking at once commenced in earnest. At the same time the woman of the house had to cook, roast, and serve up whatever the kitchen afforded. A young girl—a distant relation of the man's, as he said—waited upon the guests, who were much pleased at seeing women-folks attending upon them once more. They continued in this manner, going on pretty temperately, until the afternoon, when Mac at last proposed to M'Pherson—what the latter had long been expecting—a game of cards, to "drive time into the bush" somewhat quicker. The rest would not hear of it. Mike agreed, and M'Pherson ventured a trifle and lost.

This, however, did not last long. First Bob, then Dick, went to the table; bottle after bottle was brought out; the merriment waxed louder and louder, and the whole set were in the greatest tumult, when a new guest—a strange bundleman—arrived at the hut, and threw his pack upon the ground to rest himself a little. He saluted the men, without however joining them, and asked M'Pherson to give him some meat and a damper.

"Hallo, mate! where did you come from?" said Bob, looking round to him from the card-table. "Downwards?"

"Yes, from the Rufus," replied Miller, our old acquaintance of the Dry Swamp sheep-station.

"Hallo," said Mac; "then perhaps you'll be able to tell us what's going on there. M'Pherson, man, give the poor mate a drop to drink, and don't let him die of thirst here."

"Thank you," said Miller, casting a longing, shy glance at the bottle offered him; "I never drink brandy."

"Hurrah! Here is a temperance man," shouted Mike, with his deep voice.

"Come here, my boy, and let us have a look at you; we have long wished to see such a bird of paradise in the bush. Have you taken the pledge?"

"Not yet," answered Miller, blushing; "but I mean to do so."

"Well, then, this is just the right time, before the gate is shut, my man," said M'Pherson, filling to the brim a glass of the already paid-for brandy, and giving to him. "Looking out for work, or leaving it?"

"Leaving it," replied Miller, still hesitating about taking the glass.

"But drink, mate, in the devil's name," exclaimed Jack, in a friendly manner, no longer in a hurry to start for Adelaide. "When you have rinsed your throat a little, you can tell us how things are going on at the Rufus, and what's the row with the black police. The dust and heat are enough to choke one."

"That is true," said Miller, taking the glass with hesitation. "Well, mates, your health and happy return," he added, in a lower voice, as if speaking to himself, as he seized the proffered glass, raised it to his lips, and emptied it at one draught.

"Pretty good stuff that," said M'Pherson, laughing. "Bless me, my man, you take a good draught, and you will be a capital catch for the temperance gents. They will make something out of you. You are a shepherd?"

"Hut-keeper," Miller modestly answered, wiping his mouth with his coat-sleeve.

"And have been dismissed?" asked Mac.

"You have guessed right," replied Miller.

"No police business, I hope?" asked M'Pherson, cautiously.

"Go to the devil!" exclaimed Bob, angrily. "Is it any business of yours what one does in New South Wales? or have you any right to examine people when they get out of the way of the black blue-coats?"

"Nothing to do with the police," Miller quietly replied. "As far as I know, the police are after other game; and, if what I heard yesterday at the North-west Bend be true, they have already caught two of the worst and shot them."

"The devil!" exclaimed Mike, striking the table with his fist: "did you see anything of them?"

"Little enough," answered Miller, drawing the table toward him upon which Mrs. M'Pherson had just served his simple meal, "unless the fellow who got my place be one of them. He looked wild and desperate enough for anything."

"What sort of a man was he?" said Mike.

"A very strange kind of fellow, indeed," replied Miller. "He looked as if he had been knocking about in the bush, God knows how long! and had forgotten what soap and a looking-glass are like. He had red hair and beard, blue eyes, a face very much freckled, and had an ear-ring in his left ear. He had also a capital double-barreled gun, and did not seem to care very much about it when the upper stock-keeper saw it."

"Hem!" muttered Bob, kicking Mike with his foot under the table. "They caught him, you say?"

"Why, I don't know that," replied Miller, sulkily, working away at the victuals placed before him. "During the night the blacks broke into the sheep yard and drove the sheep off, and then they sent me away and engaged the other man."

"And deducted the value of the animals from your wages, eh, mate?" asked Ralph, apparently interested in the matter.

"No, they did not; I was paid my wages to the last penny."

"The devil you were!" they all exclaimed, with surprise. "And what is the name of the old 'possum who came out so strong with the cash?"

"Powell—a kind old gentleman."

"And so they sent you to the devil?"

"Yes."

"Were you long at that station?"

"About a year."

"So much the better; we all row in the same boat. We all have served a year, and are come to have at least one free day, after a twelvemonth's life like a dog. I am sure one can't do less."

"I should like to enjoy myself a little again," muttered Miller, gloomily; "but it won't do—I must go home."

"Well, what are you talking about, mate? There, take another draught; it will set you to rights, and you will understand better what you have to do. How do you like it?"

Miller had taken the glass, emptied it again at one draught, and ordered a bottle of the innkeeper, to stand treat in his turn.

The carousal now commenced anew. The German—for such they soon perceived him to be by his accent—had to recount everything that had taken place before he left the Rufus. The rest drank freely to him, and he soon overcame his reserve, and joined in the carousal with the rest. Every fresh bottle, of which the busy M'Pherson was but too eager to draw the cork, increased his excitement. They ordered wine, as brandy got into their heads too quickly; M'Pherson made the proposal himself, and brought several bottles of different sorts for his guests to taste—just to look at, as he said. They were, however, scarcely placed before them, ere they were emptied, and the whole company had reached such a degree of wild, boisterous, and drunken merriment, that they pushed the card-table aside, and commenced dancing. At the beginning of the game, it had been agreed that the winner should invest his gains in liquors, for the benefit of the whole company.

The sun was setting, when Bob, striking the table with his huge fist—for, missing his bullocks, he was obliged to hammer something—exclaimed, with a tremendous oath:

"Hallo, mates, we shall never meet again so young as we are now, and I have had quite enough of this common stuff—this brandy and wine. We are just as good as these swells, with their white hand-cases and patent boots, and deserve quite as rich tippie. Who is for a few bottles of the sparkling 'swell's tippie? We'll play at bushranger with bottles of champagne!"

"Hurrah for the swell's tippie!" shouted Ralph, whose head already suffered from his copious libations; "out with the silver necks, we'll soon twist them!"

"That's right, my boys," cried M'Pherson, with a joyous countenance, for now he felt secure of his prey. "We'll soon satisfy you! Here is the battery, and Toby shall bring glasses."

"And this, boy, shall do for the first," shouted Jack, taking out of his pocket a knife, with a corkscrew at one end, and seizing one of the bottles. "Now, we'll see what they have got in their bellies. The devil—the cork must be glued in, it is fast as iron."

"Ha! ha! ha!" roared Miller, advancing, now fully entering into the wild carousal. Taking one of the bottles, he removed the wire, and said: "That's rich; he wants to draw the cork of a bottle of champagne with the corkscrew. Here, Jack, look out!" he exclaimed, pointing the bottle at his head. He then cut the string, and pressed the cork. "Mind your head I say—"

"Paff!" the cork came out with a loud noise, and struck Jack's head, who started back not a little astonished. The uproar became universal. The wine foamed in the glasses brought by a girl, and soon disappeared down the throats of this ever thirsty crew. But the glasses did not hold enough for them.

"Plague on these long-waisted stupid things!" shouted Bob, dashing his into a thousand fragments upon the floor. "Let us have cups, that we may taste what we are drinking—or, better still, let us have a pail, Mac—hang it, let us have a pail, and we'll pour the whole lot into it."

"That's the way, my boy, to drink champagne," shouted M'Pherson, gladly humoring the mad pranks of these wild fellows. With this he fetched a pail which was standing against the house door, and, placing it between them, added, "Now, then, let the swells beat that, if they can!"

"Curse the swells!" shouted Bob, breaking the neck of one of the bottles against the nearest tree, and pouring the foaming liquid into the pail.

"Stop, I say, that won't do!" cried M'Pherson, perceiving that the rest were going to follow his example. "Hang it, bottles are not to be had so easily here in the bush. You have already broken a glass, too. Every bottle must ring, that's a sign it is good. The stuff costs one enough money as it is."

"Go to grass," cried Ralph; "how much do you charge a bottle?"

"I cannot sell it under ten shillings," replied the host, with a shrug of the shoulders, at the same time removing as quickly as possible the wire from the rest. "Gentlemen who come here are always charged twelve."

"Hang the gentlemen! Let us have a dozen of them, and fire away now at the trees, but not at people's heads," said Jack, laughing.

The bottles stood close at hand, and were soon uncorked and emptied into the dirty pail. The noisy crew were provided with teacups, which they dipped into the foaming liquor. Hastily they quaffed it, until it even trickled down their beards.

"Hang this wash!" shouted Mike, amid the general jubilation, "it is sour, and cuts one's inside. If the swells wish to drink such stuff they may, but I won't."

"I don't particularly like it either," said Dick; "but the deuce, if it cost so much money it must be good."

"I know how we'll make it palatable," shouted Bob. "Mac, let us have a few cups of brown sugar and two or three bottles of porter; that will take the acid out of this precious sour stuff."

M'Pherson was glad to do anything so that the liquors were sold. The porter came, and was poured into pails, and sugar was stirred about, and the company, who now relished the drink better, roared and shouted. The sun was just setting, as a horseman appeared in sight, traveling from the east straight for the house. The wind carried the sounds of the revelry of the drunken set to his ears; he suddenly stopped and listened several minutes to the bacchanalian shouts. Once he appeared inclined to ride round the place. He even tried to turn his horse's head toward the bush, but the animal, obedient as it usually was, pricked up its ears, and gave a low and longing neigh.

"Poor brute," said the stranger, patting his animal's neck and bending over it; "you have carried me well, and I can easily imagine that you want something more than the few blades of grass you plucked in the bush. Come, my old fellow, we will both turn in, and if—but no matter. They will give us a little time, I hope, to rest."

Giving his neighing horse the rein, the traveler rode quickly up to the house, not without having first carefully examined the carousing group before it. On approaching he seemed to pay no further attention to them, but merely nodded at those who greeted him. He led his horse behind the house, still keeping in the saddle, and waiting for the host, in order to learn from him what accommodation he had to offer.

M'Pherson was some time in making his appearance. The revelers, whose attention the horseman had attracted, indulged in all sorts of suppositions respecting the stranger, what he could want at the inn, and his destination.

"Just mind, Mike," said Bob, "that's one of these police spies, sneaking and poking about over the country. I shouldn't be in the least astonished if he were to come and count how many bottles we have had."

M'Pherson seemed to entertain exactly the same fear, for as soon as the traveler disappeared behind the house, he carried all the empty bottles he could lay hold of in-doors, where the women quickly stowed them away. He also invented an excuse for the present carousal, as he had no license to sell brandy, and a search on his premises would have been most disagreeable to him. On this point he was soon set at rest, and he perceived that he had nothing to fear from his visitor. All he wanted was a good feed for his horse, and a morsel, with a bottle of wine

for himself. He asked the host to let him have some quiet corner in his house, or at least some place away from the drunkards.

M'Pherson, delighted at being relieved from considerable fear, promised everything. The horse received a plentiful feed of oats in the hollowed trunk of a tree. M'Pherson watered it himself, and the women in the mean time laid the cloth for the stranger, who naturally had to be content with such fare as the boisterous company outside had left.

He ate his meal in silence, and the workmen felt hurt that he should keep aloof from them, and swore that he was to all appearance, too proud to eat and drink at the same table with them.

"Hang the puffed-up swell!" said Jack. "Is that the way to come into a but, and not even speak a word to the guests assembled? I wish the meat may choke him, and the wine turn to poison."

"Leave him alone," growled Mike. "After all, there is no doing anything with such swells, and they only sneak from one station to the other, carrying the news. Hurrah, boys, the bush is ours. Hang these nonsensical fellows, and let every one that has a fine coat upon his back be—"

"Stop, Mike," muttered Ralph; "then I must take mine off, for I only got it this morning from our worthy host—hang—hang him—he cheated me."

"Never mind, keep it on," growled Mike, who notwithstanding the enormous quantity of drink he had poured down his throat, was still almost perfectly sober, or at least cool. "We don't suspect you of being a gentleman, my boy, and now pluck up your neighbor from under the table, and put him on his stumps again. He was partly the cause of our having this sour stuff; and I'll be hanged if he sha'n't help to finish it."

"Miller, who was not accustomed to such indulgence, had already fallen down insensible. He was roused again by the cries and laughter of the rest, and had to begin anew. Unable to stand it any longer, he slipped away behind a bush, to get a nap for an hour or so. The rest paid no further attention to him; and, observed only by M'Pherson, he just reached a quiet place, when the sound of a horse's hoofs brought him to himself, and he looked up.

A horseman stopped before him, and looked at him for a few seconds, with a shake of his head.

"Hallo, mister!" cried the drunken fellow, with great difficulty; "are you—hic—are you going already? We have here—hic—some fine company, only—hic—gentlemen shepherds and but-keepers; but—hic—hic—horrid sour champagne. I'll be hanged—" He staggered under the bush, looked round once more with his lack-luster eyes, as if seeking for some one, and then fell back, to sleep away his inebriation.

The horseman was M'Donald, continuing his flight upon his well-fed horse. He looked for some time at the man lying before him, lost in meditation; then pressed the flanks of his faithful animal, and soon disappeared in the twilight of the evening.

CHAPTER VI.

THE GERMAN SETTLEMENT.

CLOSE to Adelaide, bordering upon the capital of South Australia, the houses almost touching, or being at least within sight of each other, lay a small town, inhabited principally by Germans, and called Saaldorf. Its outward character was English; and the better sort of houses resembled English cottages in cleanliness and neatness of appearance; while others, with their tasteless, variegated colors, reminded one of the old home of their occupants. Everything, however, was in order. The hedges and railings were kept up in the best style; the streets were clean; the windows brilliant. Small groups of fat-cheeked, healthy-looking children romped and played outside, looking somewhat more untidy than the buildings. The type of the German peasant youth, with their round chubby faces, could be plainly recognized in the majority of them.

This small place consisted perhaps of from thirty to thirty-five houses, with two churches, and as many inns, or "hotels." It was distinguished from the English towns of South Australia, inasmuch as it contained no jail, usually the center of all towns in New South Wales. The land in the vicinity was also occupied chiefly by Germans; and the want of all such artisans and tradesmen had first allured a

smith to settle there among his countrymen. Then followed wheel or cart wrights; then a saddler; then came two tailors and a shoemaker. These were shortly followed by a chemist; and a parson took the small flock under his care. Soon after a doctor felt himself called upon to support the chemist; and joiner, butcher, whitesmith, etc., etc., followed, until all trades had their representatives.

Later, a few more ecclesiastics of different sects and opinions arrived, and they induced the inhabitants to build several churches; and at last the train was closed by a lawyer—Doctor Spiegel. Thus a regular little German town had arisen, surrounded by a mixed population of Germans and English. The border lands, each having a small separate homestead, were mostly occupied by Germans; but a few Irish and English farmers also cultivated wheat, barley, potatoes, and other products.

The settlements in Australia are essentially different from those in the United States of America; inasmuch as in the former the price of land is by far higher than in America, and, consequently, the less wealthy class of immigrants can only buy a much smaller portion. They generally rent the land from an English owner, the tenant having the right of pre-emption, if put up for sale. They improve it, and pay from four to six pounds an acre. In the German settlement of Australia land is therefore mostly seen divided into squares, which are substantially fenced in, and usually contain from ten to twenty acres each.

On every such station the German builds his house, and whatever else he may require, as seems most convenient to him, following his own taste, and almost invariably home models. But the German village character of such settlements is thereby, as may easily be imagined, entirely lost. Every one lives upon his own land, and it is only in the small towns, where the inhabitants have other pursuits besides agriculture, that they meet at one spot.

At Saaldorf, then, as this small place was called, lived among others, with whom we shall hereafter become better acquainted, the whitesmith Lischke. His lot of land adjoined the town, and he thus followed the double calling of a farmer and his profession. Whenever a call in his generally brisk trade allowed him, he cultivated his land himself, or at least took care that his two men performed the necessary work. The household affairs were attended by his wife Katharine and his daughter Susanna, at that time eighteen years of age.

Lischke, a very simple, but extremely active man, had arrived in Australia about ten years before the time to which our story refers. He had not a penny in the world, and worked during the first years in the port, to pay for his passage. Through his industry, economy, and indefatigable exertions, he not only managed, after a few years, to farm a piece of land, with the right of pre-emption, but he took advantage of this privilege, and soon acquired the reputation of a man well-to-do. He made a good deal of money, and both he and his wife took care of what they got. He was proud of owing all to his own exertions, and those who could say the same of themselves stood high in his estimation. He thought but little of his neighbors; and when he heard of somebody inheriting a great deal of money, or gaining it in some other unexpected and easy manner, his favorite saying was: "Plenty of humbug—easily gained, easily lost, they won't go on long, and they will soon be puzzled what to do."

On the morning on which the reader first makes his acquaintance, Lischke went to look at his fields, and was just returning along the broad road between fences, with his hands in his pocket, a short pipe in his mouth, and looking very contented. He had got in the year's harvest most satisfactorily; his fields were in good condition, and the calculation he had made on his way, of his probable gains was favorable beyond all expectation. As he slowly and contentedly sauntered along, he heard the sound of hoofs behind him, and a young man, evidently also a German, soon overtook him.

"Ah, it is you, Christian," said Lischke, returning with a friendly nod the greeting of the rider, who dismounted and led his horse by the bridle. "How are you, and where do you come from this afternoon?"

"From Milheim, Mr. Lischke. I went to order some maple wood for a job I have in hand."

"Indeed, and where are you going now—over the Torrents?"

The young man was silent for a minute, and he seemed to blush. At last he said rather bashfully—

"The fact is, I wanted to see you, father Lischke, I—I have a request to make."

"To me?" exclaimed the whitesmith. "Something important, no doubt. Perhaps like the last time you came to me in great anxiety, with a very important request too, and after all it turned out that you only wanted to borrow my plate-shears to cut a few hinges. Ha, ha, ha."

Christian Helling blushed deeper still, if possible, walked a few steps further in silence, and at last said in a whisper—

"I wanted that very time to tell you exactly the same thing that I wish to speak about to-day, but I could not find heart to do so, and even now I can scarcely get it out."

"Get it out, man," said the old man, with a laugh; "but stop," he added, looking at him somewhat suspiciously, "I—I think I can guess what it is. You want to borrow money, and honest people have always some difficulty in getting this out, while rascals find nothing easier. Have I hit it?"

"No, father Lischke," replied the young man, turning quite pale. "It is, indeed, something more important still."

"More important still than borrowing money?" exclaimed the old man, stopping suddenly with astonishment.

"Yes," answered Christian, with a violent effort. "I—came to ask you for your daughter. Now then," he exclaimed, before Lischke could answer, "it is out, and I feel as if a mountain had been removed from my breast."

"My daughter?—hem!" said Lischke, looking rather surprised, and stroking his chin; "that's all! Well, Christian, we can talk this matter over. You are an honest fellow—have been thrown into the world from your childhood; but, by-the-by, have you asked the girl what she thinks of it? After all, she must be consulted too."

"Not yet," replied the young man, half disconcerted. "I wanted to know how it would suit you first, and whether you and Mrs. Lischke do not object."

"That's honorable," said Lischke, shaking the young man by the hand. "Look, Christian, I am pleased with your delicate way of proceeding. You are a decent fellow, and of the right sort. Then you have a good business; and I do not see how my wife can object to the proposal, even if she should at first miss the girl. I suppose Susan likes you?"

"I hope so, Mr. Lischke," replied Christian, cheerfully, and with a deep sigh. "We came over together, and, although we were both very young, we always liked each other, as brother and sister should do. I have thought of this for the last three years, and have been working like a horse in order to succeed at last."

"Three years," observed Lischke, smiling. "Then you have kept it deuced secret, for I never suspected anything of the sort."

"If Susan should have noticed it," said Christian, with some perplexity, "I don't care so much, as it was intended for her, and not for you."

"Well, I will tell you what, Christian," said Lischke, good-naturedly; "I, for my part, have nothing to say against the proposal, and I will even speak with my old woman about it, and take your part in this affair."

"You are very kind."

"Never mind! You are a good fellow; you have worked your way up bravely, and have now good prospects. My old woman has, indeed, some pretensions about her Sussey, and talks of great merchants, and all that sort of thing; but I don't approve of such ideas. There is plenty of humbug in the world, Christian—plenty of humbug. You are an honest fellow; and not only a good joiner, but you also understand farming. So, if you want the girl, and she likes you, of course, I have no objection to the match."

"Thank you heartily, Mr. Lischke," exclaimed Christian, joyfully, "and you may be sure that I shall never forget your kindness as long as I live."

"As you are in a trim," said Lischke, just as they reached his garden gate, seeing his daughter through the palisade, "you can at once address yourself to the right person. There sits Susan, with her hands in her lap; so she has time to hear you, and the rest you may

settle between yourselves." With a friendly nod to his future son-in-law, he walked more quickly than he had before done toward the door of his house. Before entering, he cast another glance at his friend, and then disappeared into the house, shaking with suppressed laughter.

After Lischke had left him, Christian remained standing a good while in the middle of the road, heartily glad that he was concealed behind an elder-tree, so that Susanna could not see him. At last, however, he took heart. At any rate, the first step had been tried, and he could not retreat; and what he had in his heart must out, sink or swim. Therefore, fastening the horse to the nearest gum-branch, he went to the garden gate, opened it, and crossed the narrow path which led to a small bower. Susanna started up as she heard the gate opened; but when she perceived Christian she sat down and, quietly waiting for him, stretched out her hand toward him.

"Well, how are you, Christian?" she asked, as he wished her good day, blushing deeply, in spite of his efforts. "How is it that you are dressed in your best clothes on a working-day? Something very extraordinary must be going on. Are the English keeping holiday?"

"No, Susanna," said Christian, extremely embarrassed, and scarcely knowing how to begin. In fact, he could scarcely breathe for agitation.

"Well," answered Susanna, laughing, "have you been running fast?"

"No; I came on horseback."

"What is the matter with you, then? You seem so very strange!"

"Susanna!" exclaimed he, taking hold of her hand and keeping it in his, "I have a small request to ask of you."

"Just the same, I suppose, as that made the day before yesterday?" replied the girl, laughing, "when you wanted to know how to spell *damson*?"

"Nonsense," answered Christian, shaking his head; "I do not want you to spell anything, I only want you to tell me one little word."

"And that is?" said Susanna, starting from her seat in dismay, as if she suspected what was coming.

"Do you love me?" said Christian, his open countenance fixed upon her.

"Certainly," said Susan; but her laugh was forced, and her eye was fixed inquiringly on that of her companion. "That's very old, and I never had any cause to be angry with you."

"That's not what I mean, Susanna!" exclaimed the young man, mustering his courage for the decisive step; "I wish to know whether you—whether you would be my wife?"

"Ha! ha! ha!" cried Susan, bursting into a loud laugh, "whether I would be your wife! Well, I certainly never felt the desire. But, tell me, Christian, have you been reading any of those pretty love tales, and wish to try yourself? You are making game of me?"

"No, Susanna," said Christian, feelingly, and looking steadfastly at her. "We have known each other from childhood; we came in the same ship to this foreign land; and there is no one I love more in the whole world. If you will have me, say 'Yes.' I know very well," he added, in a somewhat lower tone of voice, as she looked at him in her laughing, mocking way, "that you have learned more than I have; you can read and write well, and possess many advantages. For myself, I have had to work hard all my life, from childhood upward, and my parents were so poor that they could barely afford to send me to our village school for a few years. Perhaps you might find a more suitable husband; but certainly not a more faithful heart, Susanna; and I think you would never have cause to repent, if you consented to be my wife."

Christian sighed. He felt very uneasy, as Susanna still gave him no answer, but continued to gaze into his eyes as steadily as if she wished to look down into his very heart. Perhaps Susanna did not herself know what answer to make. The only child of her parents, and extremely beautiful, of an active, lively spirit, she had been spoiled by them, particularly by her mother. Mrs. Lischke was a most excellent woman, only a little too communicative; and being entirely taken up by the extraordinary and excellent qualities of her daughter, never let an opportunity slip of telling her so; and Susanna had too good a memory, and too great a respect for her mother and for herself to forget this, or even to doubt the truth of these commendations. Christian, on

the contrary, whom she liked very much, because he had in every respect been useful and obliging to her, had come on board the ship a peasant boy, and, save his honest and steady industry, made no pretensions to culture. A village schoolmaster in Germany had been able to flog a little learning into him in his earliest years. Even that school he had only attended until he reached his eleventh year, when his uncle emigrated, and took him away with him. Immediately after their arrival in Australia, this uncle died, and the poor boy was left perfectly alone; and being thrown upon his own resources, of course but little time was left him for study. Susanna had therefore accustomed herself to consider him until now a sort of subordinate assistant, although he was three years older than herself. She could not realize the notion of this new and mutual position which he had proposed to her; and, indeed, her ambition aimed at something higher than becoming a "joiner's wife." Still, this proposal flattered her vanity, and honest Christian took the unconscious smile that stole over her countenance as a good sign.

"And will you be mine, Susanna?" he said, in a low voice, at the same time trying to take her hand, which she withdrew hastily.

"Have you well considered the responsibilities of house-keeping?" asked Susanna.

"Certainly. Indeed, I have thought of nothing else for the last three years."

"And if I say 'No'?"

Christian looked at her for a few instants with his honest eyes, and said, sadly:

"Perhaps, Susanna, this would be easy to you; but it would break my heart. If you do not become my wife, for whom in the wide world have I been working and toiling? My mother is dead. I am alone; and it would not have been worth the trouble to do all this for myself only. But you will not say 'No,' Susanna!"

"I will think about it," replied the girl, with a steady and searching gaze. "To speak to you plainly, Christian, I do not think we are suited for each other. I am very wild, and cannot yet quite realize the idea of obeying a husband."

"Susanna!"

"Oh, I know all you are going to say; but it would, after all, be better for you to consider whether you might not find in Adelaide a girl more suited for you."

"Susanna!" exclaimed the poor fellow, in an earnest tone of voice.

"Well, I only wish you to think about it," said she, laughing. "At any rate, we are both of us young, and need be in no hurry. Let us take time at least to consider."

"And when will you let me have your answer?" asked Christian, very disconsolately, and with hesitation.

"Well, I shall send my answer soon. Good-by, Christian."

"Farewell, Susey. Stop! I should like so much—" He stopped, embarrassed, and looked longingly into her clear blue eyes, which were bent keenly upon him; but he did not venture to say anything else. He once more pressed her hand, turned away, and left the garden. Having mounted his horse, he rode slowly down the road which led to Adelaide, without once looking round.

Susanna remained standing in the garden. A cluster of olive-trees concealed her from the view of those within the house. With her head leaning thoughtfully on her hand, she watched Christian as he rode away.

"If father is ever so angry and scolds, I know mother will take my part; and—hal!" she cried, almost aloud, with difficulty suppressing a scream, as suddenly a hand was passed round her waist, and a coaxing voice asked her, most tenderly:

"So lost in thought, my pretty Sue, and so frightened? What were you thinking of, if I may ask?"

"That is what you may not ask, Mr. Von Pick," said Susanna, trying to free herself from his embrace. "But where do you come from so suddenly? I never heard you approach, and you really frightened me."

"I was standing behind the elder-bush," replied the young man, with a laugh, "and if I did not hear what you said, at least I noticed your weighty and earnest conversation with our honest German peasant-boy, my kind landlord. It must have been something very interesting you were settling; perhaps a new clothes-press." He kept looking up and down, as if measuring the trees.

"He asked me to become his wife, Mr. Von Pick," said Susanna, quietly.

"The deuce he did!" cried the young gentleman, with fear. "Indeed I should not have thought the fool so wise."

"He is a good young man, and an honorable one," said the girl gravely.

"Dearest, dearest Sue," whispered the young man, impressing a glowing kiss upon the scarcely-resisting lips, "can you doubt my sincere and ardent affection? I shall speak to your father this very day; I came for the purpose of asking him to take a share in an important undertaking, which may lead to fortune, and make us both rich men. May I tell him that you love me, and are willing to be my wife?"

While saying this, his lips again slowly approached hers. Susanna looked at him for a moment with swimming eyes, received his kiss, and tearing herself from his arms, hastened toward the house.

Oscar Von Pick remained behind. His eyes followed the girl as long as she was within sight; then he sat down upon the bench close by, put one leg over the other, placed his right elbow upon his knee, with his chin upon his hand, whistled a few notes, keeping time with his foot, and at last said, half aloud:

"So far, so good, my dear fellow. A precious pretty girl, sprightly, well-shaped; fresh in mind and body—and the old fellow has some money. But how shall I get married? If the coal speculations were to succeed, and flour were to rise, I should be all right. I have a good many irons in the fire just now. Hang it! why should not a speculative head, without capital, manage to pick a good income out of this mad confusion of Australian life? One only wants sense to manage the business, and to seize the right moment. Still, things run rather contrary. This declaration has come a little too soon. Hem, hem!—The old man is one of the right sort of thick-headed German peasants. These fellows fancy they never can think too much of themselves, because by hard work they have succeeded in knocking the dollars out of the land. They ought all of them to have been oxen; they have no notion of anything but hard work. The blockhead will prove as tough as leather. I know him well. With the old woman I should get on better. She is a good sort of stupid old woman. Were he to consent to the marriage and not offer to come down with any cash! However," he continued, dismissing all unpleasant reflection, "this coal business will remedy that. It has come just at the right-time. In that we are sure to agree," he added, with a motion as if counting money. "When the peasant gets scent of gain, you may twist him round your finger. At any rate, I have taken the fatal plunge, and must strike out vigorously. The old fellow must be managed, after all!"

He pressed his hat upon his head, and, with his hands crossed behind him walked up and down until he had finally made up his mind. Then he went in the direction Susanna had taken, toward the house, which was separated from the garden only by the yard.

CHAPTER VII. GOTTHELF LISCHKE.

GOTTHELF LISCHKE was a man well to do; and when his neighbors hinted that he had made a good deal of money, he never replied, but merely gave a silent and satisfied smile, as if he knew that their surmise were right. However, although his circumstances improved every year, he never showed it in his manner of living. Whenever his wife urged and tormented him to make a little more show, and at least let people see that they were not obliged to work as they did, he invariably shook his head, and said, with a laugh, "Let them talk, Kate. If we had nothing, they would give us nothing; so I am quite indifferent as to what they may say about us."

The workshop was next to the parlor, and it was not a very pleasant addition; the continual knocking and hammering of two workmen and an apprentice resounded in the room, in spite of the intervening door, which was generally kept closed. The women had grown accustomed to it, and Lischke himself maintained that the noise could not be heard.

Mrs. Lischke sat in her arm-chair, spinning, and another female was in the room. The latter, a seamstress, sat at the window, busily engaged plying her work. A little girl of four or five years of age, her daughter, was sitting

by her on the floor, playing with a rudely-constructed doll, which she rocked in her arms. This woman had evidently possessed the most dazzling beauty, traces of which might still be discerned in her noble, but thin and pallid features—in her dark eyes, beautiful chestnut hair, and soft complexion. But grief or illness had blanched those cheeks, dimmed the fire of those eyes, and a deep, sorrowful expression about her mouth seemed to have fixed itself there, never to be removed. She was a poor German woman, who lived with her child in a wretched cottage about half a mile from Lischke's. She earned her livelihood by her needle. Her name was Louisa Hohburg.

Lischke had just entered the room, for on his return from his journey he had gone into the workshop to look after the men. He seemed to be in an extremely good humor, and paced up and down the small room with hasty strides, his hands crossed over his back.

"Well, Gotthelf, have you made a good bargain to-day?" said his wife. "You look so very pleased."

"Pleased? Yes," replied Lischke, rubbing his hands; "why not? Wheat sold to-day at nine-pound ten; that's a very good price. It fell again; but so much the better for poor people."

"There is something else that pleases you," said his wife, with curiosity, very eager to know what could have made her husband, usually grave enough, so delighted. At that moment the door opened, and Susanna, with flushed cheeks, and trembling with excitement, came in, and as soon as she perceived her father, went to the door leading to her bedroom.

"Is Mr. Lischke at home?" a strange voice was at that moment heard asking in the workshop, in a temporary lull of the hammers.

"He is," answered the workman; and some one knocked at the door.

"In a hurry, I see," said Lischke, confidently, while his wife said, "Come in."

When he saw the elegant and handsome person of Von Pick enter, instead of Christian, as the old man expected, he seemed to be somewhat startled.

"Good-morning, Mr. Lischke—good-morning, madam. Busy as usual? I begin to think you would sooner find a bee idle than a woman without occupation."

With this complimentary address Von Pick entered, and without taking any notice of the seamstress, made the good wife a natural but respectful bow, and shook hands with Lischke.

"Good-day, Mr. Von Pick," said the latter, taking off his cap, and putting it upon the table beside him. "To what do we owe the honor of seeing you to-day?"

"All sorts of things, my dear Mr. Lischke," was the answer; "and I hope something good. If you have time, I should like to have a quarter of an hour's conversation with you."

"Alone?"

"It is business."

"Oh, if that is all," said Lischke, "you may go on. My good wife is accustomed to that sort of thing, and Mrs. Hohburg is almost one of the family."

"Well, not exactly business either," said Von Pick, with embarrassment, casting a side glance at the seamstress. The latter, who perceived that she was in the way, accidentally caught his eye. Without saying a word, she took up her work, led her child by the hand, and left the room.

"Well, I am curious to hear what it is. You have not been killing anybody, I hope?"

"Don't joke, Mr. Lischke; the affair is really of the greatest importance, and not only for us, but for the whole colony. I have discovered a coal mine."

"Coals!" exclaimed Lischke, receiving the weighty communication with indifference. "My dear sir, if that be really true, you will make your fortune in one year, for we want coals almost as much as bread. But—you must not be angry with me, this is not the first time people have imagined something of the sort, and the affair ended in smoke. Plenty of humbug, my good sir!—plenty of humbug!"

"Most people will only believe what they see," answered Von Pick smiling. "Will you tell me what is this, my dear sir?"

With this he drew from his pocket a paper parcel, and having opened it, held it before the whitesmith. "What do you call this, if I may ask you the question?"

Lischke, without much regard for his fingers, took the piece of coal out of the paper, ex-

amined it carefully and curiously, rubbed it, and tested it with his tongue. Mrs. Lischke also came up, and clasped her hands together in profound astonishment.

"My goodness!" she exclaimed; "it is true, and as good a piece of coal as was ever burnt. Well, you are lucky, Mr. Von Pick. I very heartily wish you success, and long life, and health to enjoy it, and—"

"Ta, ta, ta, ta!" said Lischke, breaking the piece of coal and examining it inside. "Where did you find this?—out on the road, I suppose?"

"No, my dear sir," replied the young man, "not on the road. This coal was found far off, in the interior of the mountains; not by me, but by a poor devil of an Englishman, to whom I made an advance of five pounds for his discovery. We are to carry on the undertaking in partnership. The locality will be kept secret until we have bought the land from Government, and can commence working in safety."

"And why have you brought this to me?" asked Lischke.

"Because we want a third partner to buy the land without raising any suspicion. The Governor knows at this moment that coal has been discovered, but he does not know where. If I or my friend were to go to the office to buy that land, they would see through the matter at once; Government would keep the land, and we should have to be content with a few thousand pounds."

"A few thousand pounds," muttered Lischke.

"But if you buy the land," continued Von Pick, "no one will have the least suspicion. With the capital at your disposal, it will be easy for you to commence operations; and the first thing we do will be to astonish the inhabitants of Adelaide with a wagon-load of coals, which we will draw in procession through the streets. The wagon shall be covered with flowers, accompanied by a band, and we, the three happy partners, will follow on horseback, amid the shouts of the people."

"What a lucky discovery!" exclaimed Mrs. Lischke, clapping her hands together. "Well, I only wish you—"

"Now, then, stop with your wishes, will you?" old Lischke interrupted her, pretty roughly "or, rather, don't begin them. An Englishman discovered the coal, you say?"

"Yes."

"How far from here?"

"About seventy miles from Tanunda."

"You do not know the spot, then?"

"We intend going there some of these days."

"Well, what do you want with me in this business?"

"In the first place, we should be glad for you to accompany us; but then there would be danger of your betraying the share you have in the discovery, and thus you would lose the chance of buying the land for us."

"Hem! What then?" said Lischke, who had a good idea of the principal aim of this conversation.

"We wish to know, my dear sir, whether you would not advance a small capital at a percentage, which you may fix yourself, if you do not wish to enter as a partner?"

"I thought so," said Lischke, with a nod.

"What enormous profits we could make out of a coal mine, I need not tell you."

"No, certainly not, if you had but found it," replied Lischke, dryly.

"But, Mr. Lischke—"

"I tell you what it is, Mr. Von Pick," Lischke said, interrupting him; "nearly every six months since I came to Australia, and that's a pretty number of years ago, have I heard of the discovery of a coal mine. A number of people run about like mad, and talk of shares and 77 per cent., are going to name a committee, and God knows what! and at last, my good sir—Plenty of humbug! The affair dies out. In four weeks it is forgotten, until the same story is heard again of another place."

"But, Mr. Lischke—"

"It is of no use. Just because coals are wanted so much, and because they would prove the greatest blessing for the land, more than all your mines of precious stones, were people to find amethysts and sapphires and brilliants by cart-loads—on that account people run mad upon the subject. A coal mine may, perhaps, be some day really discovered by some lucky fellow."

"You speak as if we only imagined we had discovered the coal mine in order to cheat you!" said Von Pick, half laughing, half offended.

"Nay, my good sir," replied Lischke, dryly; "I have not the slightest idea that you mean to cheat any one; but if you have given that Englishman five pounds for this piece of coal, then he has cheated you. That is my opinion on the subject—nothing more or less."

"I am firmly convinced—"

"That is your business," answered Lischke, interrupting him, "and no concern of mine. Your own money and time you can employ as you list; but, in one word, I'll have nothing to do with the affair."

"For God's sake, Lischke," said his wife, remonstrating.

Lischke paid no attention to her remark. He took his cap off the table, as if he wanted to go away; but suddenly changed his mind, and left it where it was.

"My good Mr. Lischke," said Von Pick, "I cannot blame you for your caution, although it is misplaced in this case. Experience has given you prudence, and perhaps suspicion. If you have no confidence in the undertaking, I should be the last man to endeavor to persuade you to embark in it. However, you will be convinced some day; and I hope shortly to be able to lay before you the proofs of our discovery, when it will still be in your power to join us."

"How very kind the Baron is!" said Mrs. Lischke, who could restrain herself no longer, hoping by a few kind words to make amends for the incivility of her husband. "It is a fortunate thing that there are such kind, good-natured souls in the world, and that all are not such obstinate men as you are, Gotthelf."

"I am much obliged to you, Mr. Von Pick," said Lischke, "for the confidence you place in me, and I wish, with all my heart, that the Englishman may not have taken you in. Well, what was the other favor you had to ask? You mentioned two. Mrs. Hohburg is sitting with her work in the sun, and I should like her to come in again."

"Mr. Lischke," said Von Pick, considerably embarrassed, aware that this was not the most favorable moment to speak of an alliance with his daughter. Having, however, gone so far, he perceived that he could not retreat, so he continued:

"Why, the second affair is much more important still than the first."

"More important still? Well I am very curious to hear what it can be!"

"It is a matter in which my future happiness is concerned."

"The deuce it is."

"As well as that of another and dearer being," continued Von Pick, in a low, scarcely audible voice. "It concerns your daughter."

"My daughter?—Sussey?" exclaimed both husband and wife, with astonishment, and Mrs. Lischke folded her hands in her lap.

"In one word, Mr. Lischke," said the wooer, launching boldly into his subject, "I have come to ask for the hand of your daughter."

"Gracious goodness!" exclaimed Mrs. Lischke, "how very kind of the Baron!" But Lischke looked at her savagely, and said:

"Never mind her nonsense, Mr. Von Pick; she knows no better."

"But, Lischke—"

"And, as regards your offer," continued the latter, without heeding the interruption, "I am glad you have behaved so straightforward and honorable, and have brought out the matter at once. I will give you my answer in as short and concise a manner."

"Dear sir—"

"My daughter does not suit you."

"But, husband—"

"And you do not suit my daughter," he continued, coolly.

"But, Mr. Lischke—"

"Besides, the girl has some one else in her head, who, if I am not mistaken, spoke to her on the subject this morning. At any rate, he has already asked me for her hand."

"And you never told me a syllable about it!" said his wife, angrily.

"I only heard of it myself a short time since," said Gotthelf, as a sort of apology. "Of course, I intended to consult you."

"But, if your daughter loves me instead of the other?" said Von Pick, greatly annoyed at receiving so cool and flat a refusal from a master tinker.

"If Susanna loves you?" said Lischke, looking at him slyly. "Have you asked the girl about it?"

"I think I have sufficient cause to believe

she does," replied the young man, with assurance.

"Indeed!" said Lischke, looking earnestly at him. "And you have, no doubt, told the silly thing all sorts of nonsense. For the old man, a coal-mine, and the girl, a powder-mine! Well, I like that!"

"Mr. Lischke, I can assure you—"

"I tell you what," the whitesmith interrupted him, pretty roughly, and with no very friendly mien, "I have nothing to say against your demand; every one has a right to ask parents for the hand of their daughter. Whether they will give it, is another matter. But to confuse the girl's head first, that won't do. I hope the damage may be repaired," he added, more calmly; "for I may at once tell you that this marriage can never take place."

"But, Gotthelf, for God's sake—"

"Your daughter is eighteen years of age, and has also a word to say in this affair."

"Stuff and nonsense!" exclaimed the old man. "Such young and inexperienced things know nothing of life, and must rely upon their parents' decision."

As usual, Mr. Lischke carried his point, reproached his daughter in the most bitter terms for having given the fellow the shadow of a hope; and he treated his wife in such a manner that she sat down in her arm-chair and had recourse to her last remedy—tears, which, however, entirely failed on this occasion. He then called Mrs. Hohburg into the room, in order to put a stop to the unpleasant family scene, and went to the shop and set to hammering on his anvil with might and main.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE STRANGER.

MRS. HOHBURG had resumed her seat by the window, after pacifying her child, which, terrified by the unusual noise in the house, had nestled in her bosom and began to weep bitterly. At last it grew tired, and placed its little head upon its mother's lap and fell asleep. The latter placed it on the hard floor, making a pillow for it with her shawl. The child slept here as soundly as in its little bed. In ordinary circumstances, Mrs. Lischke, who was extremely fond of the child, would not have suffered this. Her attention was attracted by other matters, and she suddenly left her spinning and retired to her own chamber. She was determined not to see her husband again, who, in her opinion, had done both her and her daughter a great wrong. Susanna also left the room.

An hour had elapsed, and Lischke was still hammering away at his work, making the sparks fly in all directions, while his workmen and apprentice followed the example given by their master, when a stranger passed the house, stopped, and came toward the window at which Mrs. Hohburg was engaged with her needlework. He appeared as if anxious to speak to her; but he altered his mind and went to the workshop, which he entered.

The apprentice noticed the stranger, and told his master of his approach. The whitesmith rose to welcome him, and inquired what he wanted. He was very glad to have the chance of half an hour's conversation with somebody, which would enable him to get rid of unpleasant reflections. The stranger might have business with him; and even if such was not the case, hospitality is practiced so generally in Australia, that a visitor is sure to receive a hearty welcome wherever he may present himself.

The stranger now knocking at Lischke's door was an old acquaintance of ours, who had found his way through bush and wilderness to the densely populated part of Australia; in fact, it was McDonald. However, as he stepped into Lischke's house, his old friends at Mr. Powell's farm would scarcely have recognized him.

The squatter had been changed into a townsman, and was clad in a respectable dress of dark cloth and patent boots. His long beard had disappeared, the only vestige left being a small, closely-cut whisker. His hair had been cut short, and a pair of light-blue spectacles, covering the eye, completed the disguise. He still wore his bush cap—of course he could not carry a hat in his saddle-bag, which, hanging over his left arm, had become pretty empty and light.

"What can I do for you?" asked Lischke, as the stranger, passing through his workshop, entered the house. The whitesmith, at first

sight, almost invariably disliked fashionable people.

"You are a German, are you not?" M'Donald replied, in tolerably pure German.

"Yes, certainly," replied Lischke, somewhat surprised; "but you are not, I believe?"

"Yes, I am," replied the stranger, with a smile. "A residence of many years in England and France has, perhaps, given my pronunciation something which may strike you as foreign. Allow me, nevertheless, to greet you as a countryman; and permit me, as a stranger, to ask you some questions about the place!"

"With all my heart!" replied Lischke, shaking him by the hand. "But be so kind as to walk in." Without waiting for an answer, he untied his green apron, wiped his hands upon it, and once more invited his guest to follow him into the room.

M'Donald obeyed, and entered the apartment, at the window of which he had seen the seamstress, whom he saluted respectfully.

"Where do you come from?" Lischke asked, giving his guest a chair, and taking one himself. "Pray make yourself at home, and put your bag down. It is warm to day and rather fatiguing traveling. For my part, I would rather sit the whole day at the anvil than be one hour in the saddle."

"I have come on foot," said M'Donald; "and a pretty long way, too."

"On foot! that is worse still; but only from Adelaide, I suppose?"

"Quite another direction—from Melbourne, sir," answered M'Donald.

"From Melbourne on foot!" exclaimed old Lischke, with astonishment, casting a somewhat suspicious glance at the dusty but neat boots of the stranger.

"No," replied the latter; "that would be too much of a good thing; I have only walked about ten or twelve miles. My horse was bitten by a black snake, and died in spite of all my efforts."

"Well, that is a sad affair," said Lischke; "then you were compelled to finish your journey on foot?"

"What could I do? When people see you must have a horse, the price rises in proportion, and here I shall have plenty of opportunities for getting one."

"You are perfectly right," said Lischke; "but after such a walk you must be hungry, and—"

"Not hungry," said M'Donald, as Lischke was rising; "but may I ask you for a glass of milk?"

"Certainly, with the greatest pleasure. As the women folk are all away, Mrs. Hobburg, would you be so kind as to get a glass of milk?"

The woman rose and left the room to do as she was requested. On hearing her name mentioned, the stranger looked up hastily, and gazed for a few moments at her slender, sickly form.

"Did you say Hobburg?" he asked his host. "Who is this lady?"

"Lady?" said Lischke, with an expression of pity; "she is a poor woman living in the neighborhood. She earns a scanty livelihood by going out to work. She is married, but her husband is a rascal. He left her suddenly, and went no one knows where, perhaps to California or some other distant land. Now she is left alone here, and leads a miserable life; but she behaves so nobly that we are all glad to assist her whenever we can. She will not accept of charity, and so we give her work, that she may at least have something to support herself."

"Poor woman!"

"Yes, dear sir, this is a sad thing for a person in Australia," said Lischke, who in the preceding family scene found rich matter for this reflection. "A woman who has a worthless husband here is lost, and might as well throw herself into the water. I don't know whether it is in the air, or something else; but people here will drink, and when they have once begun, poverty comes at a rapid pace. And what good can it do them, after all, I should like to know? At home a man may get a little too much now and then, and sleep it off; the next morning, when he considers the matter, he finds it has cost him a few dollars, and there is an end of it. But here they throw money away by handfuls; everything they have goes for wretched brandy which I would not even pour down my sleeve. Drink has been the ruin of this man, who was once very respecta-

ble, and could talk very learnedly. His hands were white as a woman's, but he could drink like a brace of dragoons. Yes, a man out here who has a daughter must be careful to find her a decent and honest husband, or else it will be a bad job, and the devil will get into the house."

"You are married, I suppose?"

"Yes, I should think so," replied Lischke, laughing. "A farmer would lead a wretched life here without a wife. It is not always very bright. Are you a bachelor?"

"Yes."

"And have come from Melbourne through the bush?" repeated Lischke, who had not yet got over his astonishment. "Bless my heart, it must be a long and tedious way! I believe there have been some skirmishes in New South Wales lately, between bush rangers and blacks! Did you hear anything about it?"

"Yes, I heard something of the affair," replied the stranger; "but, you know, such things are usually very much exaggerated; a mouse becomes an elephant in no time."

"Yes, there you are right," said Lischke, with a laugh, thinking of Mr. Von Pick. "There is plenty of puffing here, too; it grows as thick and high as gum-trees. There is your milk; pray, Mrs. Hobburg, be so kind as to bring a little bread and butter; cold milk is not very good by itself."

"I am sorry to give you so much trouble."

"Nonsense," said Lischke; "I can't see any trouble in giving one's guest a little bread and milk; it is the very least one can do for him. Thank you, Mrs. Hobburg; just be so kind as to put it upon the table. You can help yourself, and I wish you a good appetite."

At the mention of the name, the stranger again examined the countenance of the woman, now turned toward him; but she resumed her work.

"May I ask your name?" said Lischke, at last, after watching with great pleasure the stranger's enjoyment of his simple meal. "Mine is Lischke, and I am a whitesmith."

"My name is Schreiber," replied M'Donald.

"I took you at first for a squatter," said Lischke. "You look very much like an Englishman, but you are not a squatter?"

"No; I once had the intention of settling somewhere; and if I find a suitable place, I may do so yet."

"The best thing in the world for a man to do," said Lischke. "The land about here is not very fertile; but it produces very good crops, and an industrious man will always make it answer."

"Do you know whether there are many ships in the port of Adelaide ready to sail?"

"Ships?"—startled by the suddenness of his unexpected question, and not able at once to answer it—"well, indeed, I do not know. We hear very little of that here, nor do we care about it, except when some German ship comes in with immigrants and letters from home."

"But you ship your products?"

"The merchants do that, when anything does get shipped. We sell almost everything to brokers; it is more convenient. They come to our place for whatever we have, and we have no further trouble."

"Shall I be able to get any information on this point in the neighborhood?"

"About ships? Oh, yes. Dr. Spiegel takes in the paper, with an account of all the ships which arrive or depart, and when they sail, and what they are laden with."

"And where does he live?"

"Close at hand. But, if you are going to Adelaide, you will soon get the information. There you will find the papers in every tavern."

"But why do you inquire about ships? Do you want to leave Australia?"

"No," said M'Donald, not deeming it advisable to acknowledge his intention. "On my way I bought a lot of skins of Australian birds, and I should like to send them to Germany before they are spoiled by insects."

"Oh, then, you are a sort of Naturalist, as they call it, I think," said Lischke, "who store up bags full of weeds and skins of birds, and arrange them in cases. You would find one kindred spirit in Saaldorf, who kills every bird he can catch, and then offers them for sale."

"Indeed," said M'Donald, with a smile; although I have always taken a great interest in the animal kingdom of Australia, it has been a secondary matter with me. I am a doctor by profession."

"A doctor!" shouted Lischke, starting from his chair. "Then you must stay here; we want a doctor very badly. It would be just the thing if we could get a good doctor in the place, and you look as if you understood your profession."

"I will tell you something," continued Lischke, striking his hand upon the table. "I have an idea, and if you agree to it you will do me a favor. Stay with me a few days. I have a spare room, and you will not cause us the slightest inconvenience. In the meantime you can look about, and I know the place will suit you."

"Well then, done! I shall avail myself of your hospitality for a few days," answered M'Donald.

"That's right said Lischke," rubbing his hands.

Lischke was delighted.

"Go at once to Dr. Spiegel, and arrange with him. He is a very kind and obliging man, although he may have a few absurd notions in his head. In the mean time my girl will set your room to right, and— But, bless my heart," he said, suddenly, "where can she be all the time? Mrs. Hobburg, have you seen Susanna?"

"She went into the garden some time ago."

"Into the garden? I hope she is not—" but he quitted the room without finishing the sentence, leaving the stranger and Mrs. Hobburg alone.

"The name of Hobburg," said the guest, after a short silence, "awakens in me old, dear, and painful recollections. From what part of Germany do you come, if I may ask that question?"

"I?" said the woman, with a deep blush, but without looking up from her work; "from—Thuringen."

"Then I was mistaken; I do not know that part; I was, however struck with the name. It is wonderful how a single word, a mere sound, can sometimes bring to our minds scenes of our youth, and endow old and long-forgotten images with all their freshness, life, and splendor! Happy is he whose path of life they illumine, and do not throw their dark and gloomy shadows across it!"

"Happy indeed!" said the woman, in a low and scarcely audible voice.

M'Donald rested his head upon his hand, and gazed intently into vacancy, as if lost in a dream. Occasionally, however, he would cast a searching glance at the woman. At last, Lischke returned, and pointed out the way to Dr. Spiegel's, urging him to go at once, so as to be back before dark; and then he returned to his own work, satisfied both with himself and with what he had done. He felt he had done what was proper in expelling the unwelcome son-in-law, and that was sufficient. Christian, on the contrary, was the right sort of husband for his daughter, and now that he had moreover found a lightning-conductor for unpleasant scenes, he was in a particularly cheerful humor.

At a short distance from Lischke's, as the worthy man had said, and on the road to Adelaide, lived Dr. Spiegel, who, several years before, had come from Germany with his wife and mother. There was something else he brought over, which he would have done far better to have left behind, i. e., a too-poetical idea of the distant country. The German sense of the beautiful filled his head, and, unable to realize the creations of his imagination among the ungrateful generation of his own country, he sought a new sphere of action in the still young and blooming Australia. Every year a considerable number of such enthusiasts emigrate from Europe, but particularly from Germany, and the fate of their predecessors in misfortune is no warning to them, for the very reason that they consider *their* ideas alone correct, and naturally condemn all others without hesitation.

Dr. Spiegel belonged to the better sort, perhaps to the best, of his class. Making due allowance for his dreams, he was a most estimable, honest man, a good husband and son. He possessed many other good qualities; and if he had been content to write his theories and print them, his weakness would not have been apparent. His fault consisted in trying to put them into practice—a test, which, indeed, very few theories will stand.

M'Donald reached Spiegel's house, whose name he saw in porcelain letters upon the door. On his way he had effected a slight change in his appearance; for in passing by a

batter's he had exchanged his bush cap for one of the usual cylindrical hats. There was now nothing peculiar in his dress to render him different from a townsman. His step, too, had become light and elastic. For the first time for several months, he felt at least in partial safety. Here, in the midst of Germans, for one of whose countrymen he might pass on account of his knowledge of their language, he scarcely need fear discovery, even if his pursuers had followed his tracks so far. Moreover, he was near the sea, and he fully resolved to leave Australia, if possible on board a German vessel, and take up his abode in Germany. As long as he was in Australia he could never reckon on perfect security, even in the most distant bush. The last occurrence had been a warning to him, and he was resolved not again to expose himself to the horrors of an Australian prison. He felt that he could not bear this continual agitation, the continual dread of discovery, the continual danger of being recognized and apprehended. He wished to put an end to such a state of affairs as quickly as possible; he wished to preserve the freedom he had gained at the risk of his life. He never could feel himself in safety, until, out on the ocean, he might see Australia—which to him was nothing but a vast prison—disappear in the distance behind the blue horizon.

According to custom, after a knock at the door, M'Donald at once entered the house, and went into the lower room, where Mr. Von Pick was holding a very interesting conversation with old Mrs. Spiegel, and gaining every minute in her good graces.

"I am afraid I am disturbing you," said M'Donald, entering the room, and bowing to them; "and I have, moreover, a favor to ask of you. Have I the pleasure of speaking to Dr.—"

"My son will be here immediately," said the matron. "This gentleman is a friend of my son's, the Baron Von Pick. Whom have I the pleasure—"

"Schreiber; I am a physician—"

"I suppose you wish to settle here, Doctor?" said the matron. "But pray be seated."

"That depends upon circumstances," replied the stranger. "In fact, I wish—"

The door opened at this moment, and in came Dr. Spiegel.

He received the stranger in the kindest manner; and M'Donald, introducing himself as Dr. Schreiber, spoke, without loss of time, of his wish to see the German or English newspaper, in order to ascertain the time of departure of the various ships.

"With the greatest pleasure, my dear sir," replied Dr. Spiegel, taking him by the arm. "Pray sit down a moment; I shall be with you immediately."

"Now, sir, I am quite at your service. Pray, mother, where is the *South-Australian Register* and the German paper? Ah, here are the last numbers! Sit down, and look out what you want. If I can give you any information, I shall be most happy to do so."

M'Donald thanked him, and drew up to a table in the middle of the room which was covered with books and writings. He glanced over the papers, and made a note of what interested him in his pocket-book.

"I suppose you come from inland?" said Spiegel, as M'Donald pushed the papers away and rose from his seat. "In the bush, papers are certainly somewhat scarce. Do you intend to leave Australia?"

"No," said M'Donald. "I am a physician, and, at the same time, something of a natural philosopher; and I have a cargo of stuffed birds, which I wish to send to a friend in Germany. I should like to find a safe, and, if possible, a German ship. I see there are two such advertised to sail in a short time."

"Yes, if you believe the advertisement," said Spiegel; "but that is never to be trusted; for when the day of sailing mentioned in the paper arrives, the departure is frequently postponed. That will not matter. Send your things on board the *Albertine*, of Hamburg, which has just arrived in port. The captain's name is Helger, and he is a very intimate friend of mine. You need only say you are recommended by me, and I know he will take care of your things. If you like, I can give you a few lines to him."

"You are very kind," answered M'Donald. "Yes, I should be very glad: I am, of course anxious that the box should be kept dry, as the contents are rather valuable."

"Stay here this evening," said Spiegel,

quickly, "and take pot-luck—plain fare, a cup of tea and a piece of bread-and-butter, and I'll read you a few chapters out of my 'Antipodes,'—that is the name of the novel. You can spend the night with us."

M'Donald was anxious to keep on good terms with Spiegel, at least as long as he remained in the neighborhood. He therefore excused himself by saying that he could not possibly avail himself of the invitation for that evening, as old Lischke had kindly invited and was now expecting him.

"That is different," said Spiegel; "of course you must go this evening, although I must say Lischke is a fearfully tiresome fellow, who can talk about nothing but his farm or trade. Now I think of it, I intend asking his daughter next Tuesday evening, with a few more friends. The old man will not accompany her, and his wife never goes out. We can have a little music and reading, and you would do me a great favor by joining the party."

"You are very kind—"

"And," continued Dr. Spiegel. "I'll give you the invitation for Susan. There—pray deliver this to the young lady. By the way, what is your profession?"

"I am a physician," replied M'Donald.

"I will accompany you a short distance," said Dr. Spiegel, as the stranger took his hat. "Stop—I recollect now that Captain Helger, of the *Albertine*, was to be at Saaldorf today. If that is the case, we shall find him at the hotel, and you can settle everything with him at once. He is a most amiable man."

To avoid exciting suspicion, M'Donald agreed to the proposal, and made the acquaintance of Captain Helger, although he did not wish to become acquainted with more people than was absolutely necessary.

CHAPTER IX.

THE POOR WIDOW.

THE dusk of the evening was already closing in, when Mrs. Hobburg, or "the poor widow," as the neighbors called her, set out on her way to her small, poor dwelling. She led her little girl by the hand, and walked silently along the broad, dusty road, bordered for some distance by fences and the bush. On the other side of this bush stood her hut, on the confines of a large, well-fenced field, belonging to a wealthy Englishman.

"Why are you so sad this evening?" said the little girl, as they approached the house, and the increasing darkness of the bush awed the child—so much the more, that the mother did not speak a word.

"Am I sad, dear Lizzy?" replied Mrs. Hobburg, patting the child's head.

"You do not speak—are you angry with me?" the little one asked timidly.

Her mother bent down and kissed the child.

"No, my darling, I am not; you are very good, why should I be angry with you?"

"Then you are thinking of father, mamma?"

The woman did not answer, but took her child's hand and quickened her pace until she came to her small dwelling, when she unlocked the door, and stepped into the bare and naked room.

She lighted a tallow candle stuck in a common tin candlestick, and took out of her pocket a flask of milk she had brought from Lischke's, to prepare supper for herself and the child. This was soon done. The milk was poured out into two tin pots, taken from a chest in the corner. It was used as a store-room, as well as clothes-press. She also took a loaf and cut some bread for herself and the child, and they commenced their frugal repast.

It was indeed a poor dwelling, which the careful woman had made as habitable as possible.

In one corner stood a bedstead made of rough planks, with a hard mattress stuffed with sea-grass, and a woolen blanket; the sheets were patched in several places, but as white as snow. In painful contrast to this poor couch was a richly embroidered velvet cushion, which served as a pillow for the child, and with fine damask napkin spread out on the homely table for the tin pot of milk and the piece of black bread, reminded them of better, happier times. At the narrow window, too, there was that which did not suit this place, an embroidered curtain. It had been washed so often, that it barely held together. Altogether, the greatest cleanliness prevailed in the small room. The floor, al-

though bare and not even covered with planks, was carefully swept, and strewn with river-sand. The utensils were as bright as a looking-glass, and a few flowers, growing in the bush, had been gathered by the poor woman to adorn the lonely dwelling. The plaster which had covered the wood of which the hut was built, had fallen off in many places, and the air blew keenly through these openings. The roof, too, wanted repair; if it rained hard the water penetrated through many a crevice, forming small pools on the floor.

For the hunter in the forest, this small hut, only half protected against wind and rain, would certainly have been deemed sufficient; for the woman and child it was a sad, comfortless dwelling.

When the simple meal was over, Mrs. Hobburg removed the things, washed the tin cups in the river, and wiped them, moved the only chair which was in the room to the table, placed the light close on the border of it, to recommence her sewing.

"Are you tired, Lizzy; and do you not wish to go to bed?" she asked the child, who leaned against the table, watching her.

"No, dear mamma," replied the little one; "I will sit with you, and you must tell me something of Germany and grandmamma, and of the fine large schools which are there, and of the many little children that go to them, and learn so many pretty things."

The woman sighed; her work dropped into her lap; she beckoned her child to come near, and gently pressing it to her bosom, imprinted kisses on its gentle brow.

"But you must not cry, mamma!" said the little one, as she felt a hot and heavy tear drop upon her forehead. "Father will soon come back, and love you very much, and will not beat you again; you work so very much, without ceasing almost night or day."

"Hush, child, hush!" said her mother, pressing her still closer to her; "it breaks my heart to hear you talk so. Come, I will tell you something; fetch your little stool, and sit down beside me."

"When will father come back, mamma?"

"I do not know, dear Lizzy. Very soon, if he is still alive."

"Of course he is alive," said the little one, looking up to her mother with an expression of surprise. "You made me pray for him every night and morning, and told me yourself that God hears the prayers of children."

"Yes, he will come back, Lizzy," said the mother, unable to contain her tears any longer, "and will love us both very, very much. He only went away to get money for us to take us back to grandmamma."

"And grandmamma loves us, doesn't she, mamma?"

"Yes, yes, my child," whispered the woman, "she does; and little Lizzy will go to a fine large school, with other little girls, and sleep in a soft, warm little bed, and have warm and pretty clothes, and learn a great, great deal."

"Oh, I am so glad, mamma! I wish father would bring the money. Then you will get good warm clothes too, mamma, won't you? and you will not work so much, and we shall not live alone in the bush, as we do here."

"Go, my dear child," said the mother, who wished to be alone to collect herself, "get me a drink of water; but take care you don't fall."

"I shall not fall, the moon is so very bright," said Lizzy, obeying, and running to the door with a tin cup; "and I know the place where to get the water very well."

The child hastened to fetch the drink for her mother, and the latter, with her heavy head resting on her hand, her elbow propped on the table, seemed lost in sad thoughts, while the work lay untouched in her lap.

But Lizzy stayed longer than usual, and Mrs. Hobburg fancied that she heard several persons talking outside. She started up in fear and listened at the window—a man's voice was speaking and the child answering. She hastened to the door where Lizzy met her.

"With whom have you been talking, Lizzy—who was there?"

"A poor man, mamma, who is hungry and asked me for a piece of bread."

"A poor man?" Mrs. Hobburg said, with astonishment, for there are no beggars to be met with in the colony. "Did you not tell him to go to the inn?"

"Yes, mamma; but he said he had no money; and he also asked me whether father was at home, and whether he could sleep here to-night."

The woman shook her head, but took the loaf out of the chest and cut a piece off.

"Stay, Lizzy, till I return," she said, going to the door; "put the tin pot on the table—I shall be back immediately."

She opened the door and stepped out. At a few paces from the nat, on a fallen gum-tree, sat the man, with an old straw hat on his head, his arms crossed over his knees, and his head resting upon them.

"Here, friend, here is some bread for you," said the woman, in English; "are you unwell?"

"Yes, I think I am," replied the man, who rose as he heard the voice, and took the bread gratefully; "all my limbs feel as heavy as lead, and I can scarcely move. Could you not give me a place to sleep in?"

The woman looked at the pale, hirsute face turned up to her, and, without answering his question, she asked in a low, tremulous voice:

"What is your name?"

"Miller," replied the man; "I came a great distance out of the bush."

The woman sighed and said:

"I am sorry, my good man, I cannot take you in. I live alone here with my child, and have barely bedding enough for myself. But the inn is only a little distance off. If you walk fast, you can easily reach it in half an hour; you will find other houses on the road."

"I thank you," said the man, rising slowly from the log; and taking off his hat, he brushed the entangled hair from his brow; "but I am not able to go so far to-night, and shall lie down under a tree. I have slept in that way many a long and weary night in the bush."

He put on his hat again and turned away.

"You are not an Englishman," said the woman; and her voice sounded hoarse and hollow; she could hardly get these words out.

"No," replied the man; "I am from another country."

"You are a German; your name," she continued, hurriedly, "is not Miller."

The man turned round with surprise, when she went up to him, and, taking him by the wrist, led him toward the hut.

"Not Miller?" repeated he, with an expression almost of fear—"and you?" But the woman did not reply. With trembling hand she drew him away from under the dark trees to the light which was burning on the table. There she turned round, and looked at him for a few seconds with fixed gaze. Suddenly she let his arm go, buried her face in her hands, and sunk upon her knees against the chair, sobbing aloud.

"Louisa!" exclaimed the stranger, holding himself by the table—"my wife! my child!"

The woman did not answer; she bent over the chair, and her whole frame quivered convulsively. She kept sobbing, unable to utter a word.

"Mamma, is that father, who was to bring us money to take us to grandmamma?" asked the little one, who had timidly retreated in the corner against the bed.

No one answered. Annihilated, stupefied, Miller, or Hobburg, as we must now call him, stood there staring with fixed, lack-luster eyes at the image of woe and heartrending misery which was kneeling before him upon the ground—his wife. He had no tears; but his face was pale as that of a corpse; his eyes were fixed in their sockets, his lips quivered, his whole form trembled with shame, remorse, and despair; and he had not even the courage to stretch out his arms to his child.

This lasted for several minutes, being broken only by the low, convulsive sobs of the woman and the heavy breathing of the man. At length the strength of the latter failed him. The consequences of exhaustion, hunger, and agitation revealed themselves; his limbs refused their office; his head grew dizzy, and, staggering to the wall, he supported himself by the window-sill, sunk upon the ground, and buried his face in his knees.

At last the woman collected herself; she arose, fixed her glance for a minute on her husband, but spoke not a word; nor did the expression of her features indicate the emotions of her heart; there was on this pale brow, in these tearful eyes, no hatred, no pain, no pity, no love. Then, as if a firm resolve had strengthened her nerves, she walked up to the child, still timidly standing in the corner, took her in her arms, kissed her, and said, in a low but loving voice:

"Come, my child; it is late, and you had better go to bed."

"Is that the father, mamma," timidly whispered the little one in her ear, "for whose return I prayed every evening?"

"Yes, my child," said the woman.

"Is he ill, mamma? He said he was hungry and had no money to buy bread."

The mother turned her head and heaved a deep sigh, to relieve her anxious and oppressed heart. She tried to answer, but she could not; she felt suffocated, and could not utter a syllable.

"May I not go to him and give him a kiss, mamma?" said the child, laying her little head against her mother's cheek. "He is so sad and ill—poor papa."

"Go to him, dear Lizzy, go to him," said the mother, placing the little one on the ground; she herself stood still and motionless, following her child with her eyes.

Slowly and timidly the child went to her father, who still remained in the same posture. Twice she stood and looked at her mother; then she went slowly and noiselessly to him, laid her tiny little hand on his shoulder, and whispered in a shy and imploring voice—"Papa!"

The man started as if the low word had been a stab; his hat had fallen off his head, and with both hands he pushed his wet and entangled hair off his forehead.

"My child!" he said—"my dear, dear child!"

"Mamma said I must go to bed," whispered the little one; "good-night, papa; I am going to pray for you to be well and happy again, and that you may not cry any more; mamma will also give you something to eat; you must not be hungry, or Lizzy would cry the whole night."

"My child!" answered the man, his voice choked with emotion; and he took the child's hand, and was going to draw her toward him, but durst not, and he covered her hands with kisses. The child then threw her arms round his neck, kissed his lips, said once more, "good night!" and remained still and motionless in his arms, when he pressed her to him, and held her in a warm embrace.

"You hurt me, father," said the child.

"Good-night, my Lizzy; good-night, my own dear child; go and sleep, and may God bless and protect your dear head."

"Good-night, papa; mamma will make a bed for you."

His trembling hands unclasped the little one, who ran to her mother to be taken to bed as usual. The woman bent over the couch, prayed with the child, and closed the weary lids with a kiss, watching by her side until she slept. Then she arose noiselessly, snuffed the candle, which stood on the table, and the long flaming wick of which was hanging down on one side, and again spread the table. She put out the white napkin, the knife and fork; then she fetched the bread and filled the tin pot with milk; and took out of the chest a pewter plate with cold meal pudding for the coming Sunday.

When the table was laid, she looked at her husband, who had risen slowly and whose eyes had followed every motion.

"Come and eat, Edward," she said in a low voice, pointing to the table at the same time. She sat down on the side of the bed on which the little one was sleeping, and bent down over the slumbering child. It was only when her eye was no longer fixed on him, that he found courage to stir. He went slowly to the table, and devoured, like one famished, the provisions put before him, to the very last crumb of bread. Not a word was spoken; not a sound broke the stillness, except the clattering of the knife and fork, and the tranquil breathing of the sleeping child.

At last Hobburg finished his meal; he pushed the plate away, and rested his head on his hand. The woman, on hearing the noise, rose and cleared the table. Still not a word was exchanged between them.

At last Louisa went to the table, on which she propped herself with both her arms, for she felt her knees trembling, and said, in a low voice, scarcely above a whisper:

"It is thus, then, you have returned? It is thus God heard my prayer, that you have come to my own hut a beggar? Edward, this is fearful; and if my heart is not broken, it can only be in consequence of the long years of suffering which have hardened it."

The man did not answer a syllable. He looked down for awhile, and then his arm fell on the table, and he leaned his head on it in shame and remorse.

"What is to become of us, Edward? Your body is weary and exhausted; your spirit is broken, or you could never have returned thus to the settlement. What is to become of you? I can support myself and the child by my work—with difficulty, it is true, but honestly; how will you support yourself?"

Hobburg did not reply; he seemed to have ceased breathing; his neck, upon which the flickering candle cast its full light, was as pale as death; and when his wife, terror-stricken, seized his hand, he slipped slowly off the chair on which he was sitting, and would have fallen to the ground, if she had not supported him in her arms.

Slowly and carefully she placed him on the ground; then she lifted her sleeping child from the bed, took off the mattress, and laid Lizzy, still slumbering on the straw. She carried the mattress to the wall by the side of her husband, and endeavored to raise him upon it, but her strength failed her. She could only push the soft couch under his head, and cool his brow and temples with fresh water until he recovered.

Hobburg opened his eyes, but, on recognizing the form of his wife bent over him, he shut them again, and groaned in a low voice:

"Poor—poor Louisa!"

His wife did not reply. She assisted him onto the couch prepared for him, placed her own pillow under his head, and covered him with her woolen blanket. As she was thus occupied, he took hold of her hand and carried it to his lips. A deep sigh heaved from her breast. Then she turned away, extinguished the candle, and sought her own hard couch.

The heavy, regular breathing of the worn-out man had long been heard; in her arms slumbered the child, its dear head leaning on her bosom; but the woman watched—watched through the long dreary night—alone with her tears; and only when the dawn of the morning broke through the window, and a cold chilly draught blew through the room, piercing to her limbs which no covering protected, she dropped into a light uneasy slumber.

CHAPTER X.

THE CONVICT.

WE return to the wretched dwelling occupied by the Hobburgs, where the husband so recently found had been lying, for two days in a dangerous fever. His recent excesses, together with the agitation, shame, and remorse that ensued upon discovering his wife, had been too much for the man's enfeebled constitution, and he was seized with delirium tremens. His wife tended him with the patience of an angel, pacifying the child, already afraid of its father, and cooling the burning temples—the dry, parched lips of the patient. As, in his ravings, he called for brandy to quench his burning thirst, she knelt, trembling, at the side of the bed, and prayers and tears relieved her oppressed heart and mitigated her grief.

Toward evening on the second day he recovered his senses, slept quietly during the night, and on the third day he felt himself strengthened anew, and delivered from his torments. This fit of illness, brought on by nothing but excessive drinking, abated for a time; but, in order to prevent a relapse, it was necessary for him to give up drinking forever. Temperance alone, and a regular, sober life, would entirely cure his fearful evil, and prevent it from at least destroying the ill-used body.

The patient seemed restored, and, with tears in his eyes, he thanked his poor wife for her love and gentleness; yet, the ravings he uttered during his fever had left a painful impression upon her mind. Strange words had escaped the lips of the sick man; in his ravings he had accused himself of a crime. Naturally, the poor woman, watching in care and anxiety by his bedside, could not clearly understand the accusation, which filled her heart with fresh anguish.

When her husband recovered his senses, she requested to know what it was that weighed upon his mind, and gave his dreams that fearful and horrible coloring.

With downcast eyes and pale cheeks he listened to her words. He dare not meet her gaze, and the question was evidently a source of perplexity and vexation.

"I do not know what you mean," he whispered, in a low voice; "anything I may have said in my fever was but madness. It could not be worth remembering."

"There was something in it, Edward," re-

plied his wife, standing before him with her hands folded,—"there was some meaning in your words. Again and again your thoughts returned to the same point—blood! Good God! if such a stain should rest upon your soul! Can it be possible that, in the bush, you have not only indulged in your passion for drink, but have also become a murderer?"

"Do not grieve your heart with unnecessary anguish," her husband replied, gloomily. "If you knew all that I had suffered in the bush—the torments and the remorse—you would not wonder at the fancies of my fever. It is natural enough that all the scenes I had witnessed there should become confounded together in my dreams. But will you believe the words I uttered when asleep and in delirium sooner than those I now speak, awake and well?"

"Let it be so," replied his wife, in a sad, resigned voice. "Although I have the right to ask to share and help you to bear any weight that may press upon your mind, I cannot force you to make me your confidante; I will not urge the matter further. I will joyfully believe that my fears were unfounded. God grant that you may begin a new life from this day! I only ask you one thing; it is a question you must answer; for it concerns not only you, but your child—myself—the destiny of all of us; and that question is, what is to be come of you—what are your plans—what will you do to support yourself?"

"Louisa!" muttered the man.

"I do not ask on my own account," his wife continued, quickly interrupting him. "I have long supported myself and child, and can do so still, and will do so, as long as God grants me health and strength. I ask on your account. To do justice to yourself, you must take to some occupation, to earn at least sufficient to maintain yourself. Australia affords plenty of opportunities in all directions," she continued, more warmly; "and I should be the last to ask you to begin with any laborious toil which your enfeebled body would not bear. You require rest, in order to recover your powers. Nor need you commence at once," she said, in a tone of kindness. "Repose for a few days, and accustom yourself to the idea of being among your own, in your own home. But at the same time do not forget that you cannot continue to live as you have done hitherto; that you must not only think of yourself, but also of your child, and endeavor to improve its position and to rescue it from present misery and abject poverty."

Hoburg hid his face in his hands, and his wife watched him for some time in silence and pain; then she continued slowly and sadly:

"Yes, the misery, Edward—I cannot spare you the expression, however I may myself suffer in using it—the bitter misery—for you do not know the thousandth part of the suffering you brought upon me and your child by leaving us thus. For some time after your flight I was ill, and had it not been for the kindness of my neighbors, who discovered, however, though rather late, that we were in want, we should have died of hunger in this wilderness. This is past now," she added, quickly, on seeing what a fearful impression her words made upon the unfortunate man; "it is past and forgotten; but it was necessary you should know the truth; and I hope it will be a warning, to you though a bitter one, so that you may nerve your mind to strengthen present good intentions. The thought of what we suffered—of your child—will best protect you from a relapse."

"But what can I do?" said Hoburg, in a voice stifled with sobs; "what can I expect with my strength, and who will employ me in such a state? My clothes are worn out and in tatters. I fear there can be but one resource for me, namely, to return to the bush, however horrible that life may be."

"No; you shall not do that," replied his wife, in a quiet and determined manner. "If you are willing to work, you will find plenty of chances of employment in the settlement itself. To-morrow I will speak to Mr. Lischke about the matter; he is a most upright and at the same time practical man. He calls things by their right names, takes them in hand in the right manner, and has assisted many a one actuated by real and earnest desires of doing good. He is always ready with advice and assistance when he knows they are wanted. He will do anything he can for me, as I think I stand well in his opinion. If I seek his aid, he will not refuse it; and when you have once

commenced, you will soon be able to get on by yourself. First of all you must procure new clothes," she added, in a more cheerful manner. "You are right; in your present garments you could not ask any for work or employment. You must look respectable, or else people will have but little confidence in you."

"But I have—" muttered the man, with a deep blush.

"I know," said his wife, interrupting him; "I have sufficient left to be enabled to assist you. I have laid by a trifling sum for myself and our child that we might not be exposed to danger and want as we once were before. There, take this!" she added, cheerfully, going to the chest and fetching a bag, containing about twenty shillings in silver; "this will be sufficient to procure a few necessary and plain clothes."

"Must I go into the town in these rags?" asked Hoburg, pressing her hand, with a thankful look and tears in his eyes.

"You need not go so far," replied his wife. "Not quite half an hour's walk from this, if you follow the wide road on your left, and keep between the fences, you will come to a small shop, where cheap clothing is sold. But you must reserve enough of the money to bring back a loaf of bread. I have not a morsel in the house for the child's supper. You will have enough money, for clothes of this description are extremely cheap here. But will you be able to go?" she said, suddenly; "you look weak and exhausted. Wait until to-morrow, and rest to-day. I can go myself to fetch the bread."

"No, my child," replied Hoburg, putting on his hat; "I am strong enough, and the fresh air will do me good. Oh, Louisa, how shall I reward your kindness? But I see no end of this misery."

"If you despair," said his wife, gravely, "it will be bad indeed. But thank God! we have not sunk so low yet, and by industry and economy, may rise in the world. My only desire is to save a little capital, say thirty or forty pounds, to commence a small business in town. If I once gained so much, I should get on well, and make money. At any rate, we must go and live in town in a few years; that is to say, as soon as Lizzy is old enough to attend school. Alone it would have been hard for me to have saved so much, and would have taken many, many years; but if you help me, and apply yourself, we shall succeed much quicker. You see, Edward, I have much better hopes of you than you have yourself, and expect more from you than you do yourself; and, indeed, you ought to give me courage."

"Thirty pounds," said Hoburg, in a low, sorrowful voice, thinking of what he had wasted in the bush and thrown away in drink. His wife seemed to consider that sum as the highest aim of her ambition. "Thirty pounds! how little it is considered here, and how long it will take to save it!"

"If we once begin to save," said his wife, cheerfully, not wishing to pain him more than necessary, "the rest will soon follow. Perhaps you may get an appointment where you can save this sum in one year. You write a beautiful hand, and you know several languages; and such men are not to be found everywhere, and are frequently wanted. When you were away, old Mr. Gillmore was more than six months looking out for such a person. It may not be too late for you to find employment with him. At any rate, it will do no harm to inquire; he has extensive possessions, and employs a great number of people. But you must go now, Edward, or else the shop will have closed; and when Lizzy wakes and wants something to eat I shall have nothing for her."

"Good-by, Louisa," said Hoburg, cheerfully, for the first time looking at her full in the face, and squeezing her hand; "I hope you will see me a new man!"

"God grant it!" replied his wife, with a deep sigh; and she stood long in the door following her husband with her eyes, until a bend in the road hid him from her sight.

An hour elapsed. Lizzy awoke and asked after her father. Her mother told her he had gone to fetch some bread.

The child's eyes sparkled at this piece of news.

"You see, mamma," she said, running to her mother and throwing her little arms round her neck, "you see how kind papa is, and he keeps the promise he gave when he went away, that he wanted to get bread for us?"

"Yes, my child," replied the mother; but a peculiar and almost inexplicable feeling of sadness oppressed her heart. Was she pained at the child's innocent delusion? Did she lament that the poor girl considered her father better than he really was?

"Papa is coming back," suddenly exclaimed the little one, who had gone to the door to look out for him. Her mother followed her quickly, but a single glance showed her it was not her husband, but a stranger.

"Not yet, Lizzy," she said; "he could scarcely have come back so soon. It is a long way, and poor papa is still weak and ill from the effects of his long journey."

"May I go and meet him, and help him to carry the bread?" asked the child.

"Wait a little, my dear," answered her mother; "we will both go and meet him as soon as we see him coming."

As she saw the stranger approaching, she retired into the house until he should have passed. When he reached the door he stood still in the middle of the road, apparently seeking for something. His looks were directed toward the small house, until at last he seemed to have made up his mind, and walked toward it.

The woman, believing him to be a stranger who had missed his way among the numerous fences and bushes, went to the door to give any directions he might require. However, on recognizing the gentleman who had spoken to her at Lischke's and taken a kind interest in her, she blushed slightly.

"I see I am right, after all," said the stranger, whom she knew by the name of Dr. Schreiber. "I was almost afraid I had missed the way. I wish you a very good day, Mrs. Hoburg!"

"Were you looking for me?" said the woman, as a deeper blush suffused her cheeks. In her surprise, she forgot to return the greeting.

"Yes," said M'Donald, looking at her with an open and frank countenance; "I am partly commissioned to do so by my kind host, who was afraid that something had happened to you, as you have not been heard of for several days; and also—and I see no reason why I should deny it—on my own account. You will not be angry when I assure you that it is not curiosity, but a far better feeling, which induces me to seek you. I must however, put a question, which may perhaps seem indiscreet."

"I do not understand," muttered the woman.

M'Donald, who had in the mean time examined her features, interrupted her:

"The more I look at you," he said, "the more the conviction forces itself upon me that a strange destiny has brought together two persons whose days were once destined to flow peaceably, side by side, in their native country. You do not come from Thuringen?"

Every drop of blood forsook her cheeks, but she did not reply. M'Donald continued, after a short pause:

"Will you allow me to sit down here for a short time? This bench offers sufficient shade, and I shall perhaps be able in a few words, from the history of my life, to solve the problem of my apparent intrusion. Will you listen to me?"

"Speak," said the woman, in a trembling and scarcely audible voice, drawing her child close to her, and sitting down upon the bench as M'Donald took his station at the opposite end. He looked at her for a minute in silence, then said, suddenly:

"No! I am not mistaken—I cannot be mistaken—you are Edward Hoburg's wife! My name is M'DONALD!"

"Good God!" cried the woman, starting from her seat in surprise and dismay. M'Donald motioned to her to resume her seat, but this was not needed. The shock was too great for her, and she sunk down in her place, concealing her face in the bosom of her child.

"I was right, then," M'Donald continued, in a low voice. "This name awakened but too many old recollections in you, recollections mixed with horror, at the man who was sitting at your side. Although the world has condemned him, he is not himself conscious of having committed a bad or wicked deed. This makes me feel the more anxious to unburden my heart to you. It is terrible to have no one to whom to tell one's sorrow—who can understand one's grief. You do not know the feelings of such an unfortunate man, thrust into

the world alone in grief and sorrow, while disgrace and shame are heaped upon his head, and there is no one to share his anguish—no friend to speak a word of consolation, to raise and cheer his drooping soul."

"Oh, I know it but too well!" muttered the woman, in a sad and scarcely audible voice.

"Then what Lischke tells me about your husband is true; everything that surrounds you, the work you are forced to—"

"Pray go on," she begged of him, stretching her hand toward him. "I did not complain."

There was such a profound sorrow, but at the same time such a calm rebuke, in the expression which accompanied these few syllables, that McDonald was confused, and remained silent. He felt he had offended her, but also perceived that an apology would only probe the wound he had incautiously touched; and, after a short hesitation, he continued:

"My name must yet remain a secret between us. Condemned by the English laws, I have been transported to Australia as a convict, and have escaped."

"You are—"

"A bush ranger," said the unfortunate man, with a bitter smile; "at least, as the authorities here call it—a fugitive, on whose head a price is set; and in revealing myself to you I am impelled by something I cannot myself explain. Nearly nine years ago," he continued, after a short pause, in a calm voice, "a German family of the name of Hohburg lived in Edinburgh. In their house I found a second home; in their family circle my heart discovered the realization of its wishes. I take it for granted that those circumstances are well known to you, although I only met you once, and that was just before that unfortunate evening. You arrived only a short time before from Germany. I loved Mary, and knew she returned my affection. Although there was not the slightest similarity in our characters, Edward Hohburg became my friend. Edward was of the kindest disposition—quiet, and even vacillating. Upon his arrival in the country, he commenced many a scheme, and afterward abandoned it on y because he could not reconcile himself to the manners and customs of the inhabitants. I endeavored to guide him in the right path; and as I warned him against his own errors, and he saw how sincerely I meant what I said, he became still more attached to me. I considered myself happy. At that time a young Irishman, whose acquaintance Hohburg made through me, visited the Hohburg family a good deal. At his first appearance peace fled from the house. He was young, handsome, and rich; and it soon became evident that he was not insensible to Mary's charms. Although he knew in what position I stood toward the family—how much more closely allied to them I expected shortly to become—he offered his hand to her, and was refused. Edward told him such would be the case before he made the offer, and he did all in his power to induce him to desist. Then he sought to comfort him, and was more than ever in his company. Some time elapsed, and O'Rourke, as the Irishman was called, seemed to have buried his anger at what had passed. One evening, Edward visited us, with several other friends. It was to be a feast of reconciliation. There was much drinking: we all of us became heated and excited; but with O'Rourke an evil and ominous change took place under the influence of wine. In spite of our efforts to prevent him, he again and again turned the conversation upon Mary, and words escaped his lips which at last neither Edward nor I would bear. Edward in particular, whom scarcely anything could rouse out of his tranquillity and equanimity, trembled with rage; and indeed, as I afterward heard, the consequence brought on a violent fever, which confined him to his bed for many months. At last I asked this Irishman for an explanation. Instead of giving it, he added insult to insult; and, unable any longer to control myself, I dashed the glass which stood before me in his face. Of course he was obliged to demand satisfaction, and the following morning was to decide our quarrel. Immediately after this I quitted the room, and all the company went away. I went out into the garden to cool myself a little, and was on the point of returning into the house to make arrangements for the following day. Suddenly I heard the report of fire-arms, and when, impelled by an irresistible impulse, I hastened to the spot whence it proceeded, I was

caught in the bushes, and in that condition suddenly surrounded, seized, and accused of murder. Not far from that spot O'Rourke lay, bathed in his blood. An empty pistol was found the following day between the spot where I had been apprehended and that where he was lying, and I was accused of murder."

"Fearful," exclaimed the woman.

"I defended myself; I averred my innocence," said McDonald, wiping the drops from off his forehead; "all was of no avail! I was said to have uttered terrible threats a short time before against the murdered man. Nothing appeared to the public more likely than that we had met in the garden. It was still possible that O'Rourke might have laid violent hands upon himself, and immediately after the shot—the bullet had penetrated his heart—thrown away the pistol; yet there was something very unlikely in that. The idea of suicide was, moreover, rejected, from the shot having entered the arm, and the jury pronounced me guilty. The punishment was in some degree lessened, because the deed was supposed to have taken place while I was under the influence of wine—and instead of death at the hangman's hand, my sentence was fourteen years' transportation."

"The rest you know," continued McDonald, in a low voice. "Mary died of a broken heart before I was transported; this news was the farewell with which my native country thrust me abroad into a dungeon and misery. I lost pride, house, wealth, freedom—all at one blow—and left my country branded as a criminal."

"And you were innocent?" cried the woman, looking up to him with a pale and fearful countenance.

"As truly as the sun sinks in the west—as truly as God dwells above, sees my heart, and knows whether I speak truth or falsehood."

The woman did not reply. A shiver passed through her limbs, and shuddering, she hid her face in her hands.

"For years," continued McDonald, his eyes lighted up by a strange fire, "I endured this fearful imprisonment. For years I worked side by side with criminals, who, grown up in sin and shame, had nothing but derision and mockery for the unfortunate man who would not adapt himself to all their coarse, revolting habits. Still I was supported by the hope that my innocence must some day be established—that it could not be the will of God to load the innocent man with such fearful, undeserved punishment. Year after year passed away, and at last the coarse ill-usage of brutal jailers and overseers increased, despair got the mastery over my heart. I determined no longer to bear such misery, but to escape into the bush as many had done. How I managed this is now of no consequence; for some time I lived in a small German place of this district as a physician, and earned more than I needed, until my own recklessness, or my fate delivered me again into the hands of my enemies. Fortunately I had concealed my money, and for the second time I escaped from their clutches. They are already stretched out toward me; and once they nearly caught me again. Hunted down like a wild animal, I again sought refuge among Germans, as the deer runs among the peaceful herd to throw the bloodhounds off its tracks. Should I be driven from this, my last refuge, I should have no resource but to sell my life as dearly as possible, for I would never fall alive into their hands."

"Have you taken no steps to establish your innocence?" asked the woman, trembling; "has not the real criminal been discovered?"

"Much has been done, but all in vain," replied McDonald, sadly. "My brother, who still lives in London, has done all he could to clear up the mystery which envelops this deed. Suspicion still rests upon me, and will continue to rest upon me, from the unfortunate circumstances of that fatal night. I do not accuse my judges; the jury could scarcely have pronounced a different verdict: yet it was false. The only possible explanation is that O'Rourke in a fit of repentance, and stung by remorse, laid violent hands upon himself. But the lips which alone could testify my innocence are cold. The blood—But no more of these useless complaints," he said, suddenly. "It was not to bewail my lot that I came here. I am accustomed to bear and brave it. No; the name which I heard among these Germans awoke again the memory of those happy times. Your features revived the images of those days; and I determined first, to assure myself upon this point, and then to clear myself, at

least before you, from the suspicion of being a worthless coward. I hope my aim has been attained. If I should again fall into the hands of my pursuers, and be forced to sell my life as dearly as possible, my defense remains in your keeping; if you should return to happy England, clear my memory from the stain which rests upon it. Perhaps they will believe, when dead, that which I asserted in vain while alive."

"Does my husband—does Edward know that you are here?" asked the woman.

"Your husband? Edward?" McDonald exclaimed, in astonishment. "Has he not gone away? Has he not disappeared in the bush, or is he not dead?"

"He returned," replied the woman, in a whisper, "a few days ago, and it was his illness which kept me at home."

"Where—here?" the fugitive eagerly demanded.

"Not now, not to-day," said the woman, casting an anxious look down the road, and laying her pale, almost transparent hand on his arm. "He is gone to fetch something, and I expect him back every minute; but do me the kindness not to speak with him to-day; let me first prepare him to meet you. He is still ill and weak," she added, slowly, and the shock would be too much for him."

McDonald nodded acquiescence.

"In earlier times it would have been very different," he added, with a bitter smile; "and I cannot blame him. He must, after all, consider me as the murderer, however indirect, of his sister; upon whom he had bestowed all his affection. His silence when I lay under the fearful accusation showed me that he considered me, if not guilty, at least capable of committing the deed."

"He will do all that lies in his power—" said the woman.

"He cannot do anything," McDonald exclaimed. "I want no pardon. I am not cleared of the accusation; I do not desire to live as a pardoned criminal. What I wish is to convince his heart. The thought that Mary should have died believing in my guilt was particularly fearful to me; and that Mary's brother should consider me a cowardly murderer is also cruel. I feel I could meet my destiny with a light heart if this weight was removed from it. But this is not all," he added, after a short pause; "I have another request to make to you, madam. To speak the truth, this was the principal motive which led me to discover myself to you—although I had no fear of being betrayed by you."

"If the accomplishment of it is in my power."

"It is simply to forward a letter containing family matters, and which must be sent to its address only in case of my being taken again, or of my death. If found upon me, it would be opened. Into your hands alone I can intrust it. There is nothing in it," he continued, with a sad smile, as he saw that she took the letter with hesitation; "nothing that could be dangerous to you or any one else. It is only a will, and matters which concern no one but my brother, but which, on account of my brother, should not be seen by a stranger. Will you promise me faithfully to perform this commission in case you should hear of my death?"

"I promise," the woman replied, solemnly.

"I thank you sincerely," said McDonald, as, for the first time, a joyful smile spread over his countenance, "and shall now meet the future, whatever it may have in store for me, without fear."

"But what do you intend doing," asked the woman, with alarm, "if the police get upon your tracks?"

"I can do nothing but remain here," said McDonald, with a shrug of his shoulders. "My long residence in Germany, my continual intercourse in Scotland with Germans, has made me well acquainted with the German language, and I can pass for a German. I have, as far as possible, disguised myself; and if I can only live here undiscovered for a few months, I shall, perhaps, be able to return to Europe. At present it is scarcely possible, unless I should be able to evade the watchfulness of my pursuers at the port itself; but, at any rate, I shall make the attempt. Here I am Dr. Schreiber, and have even got some practice in the neighborhood."

"But will Lischke himself not betray you?" the woman asked. "He is a kind, honest man, but, at the same time, he entertains the great

est respect for the laws, and if he had the slightest suspicion that the police—"

"I know my German," said M'Donald, smiling, "and shall not lead him into temptation. He must not even suspect to whom he is giving hospitality. However, I have already taken apartments, to which I intend removing one of these days. There I shall be less disturbed, and safer. I see my presence makes you uneasy," he said, stopping short. "Farewell! You may, if you like, tell Edward who is living in this very neighborhood."

"Which road do you intend to take?" said the woman, who had grown more anxious during the last quarter of an hour, hoping, and at the same time fearing, her husband would come back. She did not wish the stranger, who had known him in better times, to meet him in his present wretched condition.

No one was passing along the road, save a German wood-cutter, returning from Adelaide in his light car, and smoking his short pipe. He touched his cap, with a friendly "God be with you!" as he passed by, vainly endeavoring to urge his strange team—a horse and a cow—into a brisker pace.

"The road to Saaldorf," replied M'Donald. "I promised Dr. Spiegel to spend the evening with him, and must first call at Lischke's, whose daughter places herself under my escort."

"Then this will be your best way," said the woman, anxious, above all things, to prevent a meeting between the two men upon the road. "The third turning on your left will lead you straight to Lischke's house."

"I thank you—and the letter?"

"I have given you my word, and shall fulfill your commission."

M'Donald lingered as if he wished to say something else. He opened his lips, and stretched his arm toward her, but let it drop again, bowed, and went slowly in the direction she had pointed out to him.

Just as he reached the turning, where, between two fields, a new road crossed the path, he perceived two horsemen coming toward him at a brisk trot. M'Donald saw at once that they belonged to the native police, and, to avoid meeting them, turned off to the left and walked on slowly. He had not much fear of being recognized in his present disguise. His whole costume—short hair, shaven chin, blue spectacles—sufficiently altered him, particularly as the night was closing in. His thin boots left quite a different mark from the thick bush-boots. In spite of all this he did not wish to risk such a meeting, especially when he could avoid it without causing suspicion.

M'Donald had scarcely walked a hundred paces, when the two blacks reached the place where the roads crossed, stopped their horses, and followed the pedestrian with their eyes. But he was dressed too much like a townsman to induce them to take any further notice of him. After exchanging a few words they turned their horses' heads, rode slowly along the road by which the pedestrian had come, with their bodies bent forward, that they might be the better able to examine his tracks, and put spurs to their horses when they had satisfied themselves on this point.

M'Donald heard them stop. He did not turn his head toward them, but slowly pursued his way.

CHAPTER XI.

THE TEMPTER.

WITH the money given him by his wife, to buy himself some new clothes, Hobburg went slowly along the way pointed out to him, and soon perceived before him the small shop which formed the outer limit of Saaldorf in this direction. Paying but little heed to what was going on near him, and being occupied with his own sad thoughts, he had not noticed that, close to the roadside, bordered at this part by a small thicket of acacia trees, a man was sitting on the trunk of a gum-tree examining him attentively. He had almost passed him, when a shout rooted him to the spot, and made him look round in astonishment.

"Hallo, mate!" shouted the man, with a blasphemous oath; "is it you, or is it not? Is it possible that Mr. Powell's hut-keepers should meet comfortably here?"

"Toby!" exclaimed Hobburg, much astonished to see at his side the man whom he had so shortly before left installed in his own berth on the Murray. He experienced a peculiar feeling of satisfaction that his successor should not have been able to retain the

post. He knew very well that his own merit was not thereby enhanced, but at least it proved that others were no better than himself; and so degraded was he that even this satisfied him. Under any other circumstances he would either have turned away in disgust from the wild-looking red-haired fellow, or at least have broken off his conversation with him as soon as possible. But he felt anxious to hear the news of the station at which he had long been a servant. Besides, this was one to whom he need not look up; the presence of his noble wife had made him feel ashamed of himself, and crushed him to the ground; the rude fellow by his side raised him in his own imagination.

"What was going on there when you left the place, mate?" he asked, halting before him, and carefully examining him from head to foot. "You got enough of the service precious quick, it seems. Did the blacks pay the sheep another visit?"

Toby seemed to feel very uncomfortable under the scrutinizing gaze of the man. His questions, however, furnished him at once with the best and simplest answer. He could easily imagine the German knew nothing of all that had taken place after his departure; and it was an easy thing for him to invent a very plausible tale.

"I think so, mate," he replied, laughing. "It was not long before the black rascals came again. The meal they made before, on the deuce knows how many kidneys, pleased them too well; and three nights afterward they broke down the hurdles, and drove off every mortal animal. You can easily imagine the governor did not like that sort of thing. I was very stiff, too, and so, from one word to another, old Toby had to march off. Fortunately, I had received my wages, for the short period of service, in the shape of tobacco, or else I should scarcely have got anything for my 'trouble,' as lawyers say. The missing sheep were deducted from your wages, no doubt?"

"Not one," Hobburg gravely replied; "old Powell is a worthy man."

"The devil! not one deducted!" he exclaimed, with astonishment; "well, that's right. Then you must be flush in cash, mate! or have the taverns already swallowed it as usual! However, that is no business of mine," he said, on seeing this question annoyed his companion. "At any rate you have kept sufficient to treat an old mate to a glass of brandy and a bit of tobacco. One good turn deserves another, and who knows but I may render you a service some day?"

The request was like a stab in Hobburg's heart. The money he had about him was not his own and had been given to him for a different purpose. He neither could, nor would, refuse such a trifle to an old comrade who had slept in the bush under the same roof with him. He would have enough of the money left for this, he must have enough for it.

"I suppose you are short of cash, mate?" he said, turning toward Toby.

"Quite cleaned out," replied the latter, with a curse; "if I don't soon get into clover again, I may as well look out for a comfortable place to starve in. You have got another berth? If a fellow has any luck, all goes right with him."

"I!" replied Hobburg, in an absent manner. "I am just looking out for a situation, only there is not much to be made among the Germans."

"You are right there, my boy," said the Irishman, laughing; "they have themselves all come over to scrape together as much money as possible, and are as stingy as the devil. I don't intend spending much time here among them. All sorts of things are sold in yonder house, and I should not wonder if, with good management, one might not get a lot *very cheap*," he added, with a wink and a sharp look at his companion.

"Cheap?" returned the latter, not understanding the drift of the observation. "There is nothing cheap here. They mostly want good money for bad stuff."

"Hem!" said Toby, too cautious to meet the other more than half-way.

"But what has become of your gun?" asked the German remembering the good double barrel which he carried about in the bush.

"Have you sold that, too?"

"Necessity has no law," growled the Irishman, evasively, as they were walking side by side toward the shop, "and man must eat.

Besides, it is not wanted here in the settlement; the roads are safe, and there are neither blacks or bush rangers."

"The police caught a couple up there, I heard at one of the stations on the Murray," said the German.

"Yes; there were a few about there," answered Toby, with indifference; "the swell who came on a visit to Mr. Powell's, was one of them."

"The stranger who came out to the station with Mr. Powell!" exclaimed Hobburg, pausing with astonishment, and looking at his companion quite aghast.

"Yes, of course," replied the latter, quietly, without stopping; "it was the noted Jack Loudon, but so far as I know, he gave them the slip again."

"Well, who would have imagined that? I heard afterward that they shot one of them."

"Oh, yes, he is lying in the Murray," said Toby, with a quiet laugh; "but here is the house," he added, stopping and examining the place irresolutely; what if you went in, mate, and brought that stuff out here? I have lived so long in the bush that I have a regular dislike to roofs."

"Nonsense," returned Hobburg; "you are not afraid of going into a shop?"

"Afraid?" repeated Toby, casting a cautious look up and down the road; "why should I? But you are right," he added, taking a small flask out of his coat pocket. "I shall be able, at the same time, to inquire for work. Perhaps they want a barman, and I should like that place above all things. Just think, my boy, to stand the whole day by a full cask and hold the glass under the tap; what a jolly life that must be! I wonder I did not think of it before."

"Can you write?"

"Not very well; nothing more than my name," replied the fellow, with a laugh; "and it is so long since last I scrawled that down, that I really believe I have forgotten how to hold the pen. I should not be fit for the berth, after all; and besides, I could not stay long cooped up between four walls."

"How do you do, gentlemen?" said the owner of the shop, coming to the door, without paying particular attention to the tattered appearance of the new arrivals. Most of the workmen from the bush were much the same in appearance, and they frequently had a good deal of money in their pockets.

"Hem!" said Toby, examining the man; "I know that face, unless I am much mistaken; and I fancy I once went a *sea-trip* with him."

"Johnny! by all the gum-trees of Australia!" exclaimed the shop-keeper, holding out his hand. "Where do you spring from, my boy, and how have you been this long while?"

"Not exactly Johnny, neither," he replied, with a quick glance at his companion, which was quite sufficient for his interlocutor. "My name used to be Toby; and I know no reason why I should change it."

"So it is; how stupid I am, old fellow," said the shop-keeper, taking the hint. "Hang it! such a lot of people come across one's path here, that one gets quite confused among the Bills, Johns, and Jacks. But where do you come from, and where are you going?"

"One of the questions is easy to answer," Toby answered, dryly—"from the bush; the other depends upon circumstances."

"Ah! ah! gentlemen shepherds, who bring their money to the settlements," said the shop-keeper, laughing. "Well, what can I do for you?" he continued, going behind the counter, and, as a matter of course, producing two glasses and a bottle of brandy. "Pray help yourselves," he added; "every one knows his own weight and measure best. Well, Toby, no brandy?"

"I prefer Hollands," replied the latter, producing his small flask, and half filling it from a bottle of the required liquor. "Well, here is to your health, mate."

For a time Hobburg hesitated, looking wistfully at the bottle. The good that yet slumbered in him impelled him to eschew the seductive liquor altogether; but the consequence of his previous drunkenness, the ardent longing for spirituous liquors, which sometimes degenerated into uncontrollable desire left him no peace. Had he gone into the shop alone, he might perhaps have mastered himself; but he had not the power to resist the temptation of so many glittering bottles. "It is only for this once," he thought, filling his glass with a trembling hand; "I am weak, and require a

little strength, and—it shall be the last time."

"You have not had your bitters to-day," said the shop-keeper who was watching him. "Your hand is rather shaky. But this will set you all to rights; it is genuine and first-rate stuff. You might bring children up upon it."

"Do you keep tobacco, mate?" said Toby to the store-keeper.

"How do you think I could prosper without tobacco?" he said, with a laugh. "The boys from the bush would knock the house about my ears if I did not keep the article. There is some of first quality, it melts on the tongue, and is as sweet as sugar; and what can I do for you? you want to buy clothes, eh?" he said, turning to Hohburg, who was examining some articles of clothing hanging around. "Choose what you want. The bush plays the deuce with one's wardrobe, as the swell say. Famous stuff that you have got in your hand, wears like leather, and is as soft as silk. The price is marked on the ticket."

"How stand matters about here?" Toby asked his host, in a low voice, as Hohburg examined the clothes. "Is everything safe?"

"Safe!—the devil a bit!" replied the other, in a whisper. "The native police have been prowling about the country all the morning. You have seen nothing of them?"

"The native police!" exclaimed the bush ranger with astonishment and dismay. "Are you bored with these dogs in South Australia too?"

"No, we have no notion of keeping such fellows," replied the shop-keeper; "they have come direct from the Murray, where they drove a certain—I won't mention names—into the river, and they are also close upon the heels of another. Johnny! Johnny! the repose of your soul has cost me three masses already, and after all, you are alive and kicking. It is not fair to play such tricks with one's old friends."

"Then I must look sharp and be off," said the bush ranger, without entering into the joke, and casting a hasty glance at the door. "The brutes know my tracks as well as if they had them down in black and white. Had not a smart shower, and the timely rising of the river, come to my assistance, I should not have succeeded in shaking them off, in spite of all my dodging."

"Here is something from your black friends," said the host, pointing to a paper nailed against the door.

"Have they got me on it?" asked the bush ranger, with an expression of fear, casting a shy look at the bill.

"Not you, but one of your comrades—Jack Loudon, or whatever his name may be. They followed his tracks as far as the settlements. He seemed to have turned to the Burra-Burra mine, but they lost his traces at this spot. The Germans stick on their own bits of land, and have made roads and paths in all directions. They are now searching everywhere in the neighborhood. Is he such a dangerous fellow?"

"Nonsense!" replied John, contemptuously, "a braggart, talks big and acts the generous, always mixes with the swells, and, in fact, does not wish to have anything to do with business."

"Ah! ah! one of that sort, I see," said the shop-keeper with a quiet laugh. "I know these fellows. But I am astonished they should be so anxious to secure him!"

"It is the old story," growled John. "Just as we feel uncomfortable when we know one of these spies is sneaking about in the neighborhood, so these gentlemen never feel at their ease as long as an escaped convict is left in the bush. Not that they fear Jack Loudon, they might very well leave him in the bush. I don't think he would hurt a sheep; but they are afraid of the example. What he can do, others believe they can do also. Therefore the police must catch the fugitives again, or shoot them, or they would soon not have a single fellow left inside the prisons. But I wanted to say something—Oh, just read this bill to me, will you? It is always interesting to know how these gentlemen express themselves about us, although it may not concern oneself."

Hohburg's attention had also been attracted by the bill stuck up at the door, and he cast a hasty glance at the paper. But in those times notices of escaped convicts were too common; and, after reading the first few lines, he turned again to the clothes. The £100 reward did not long attract his attention.

"Not a bad price," said Toby, with a smile, as the bill was explained to him.

"I should think so," replied the other. "One hundred pounds and full pardon to any ticket-of-leave man. Magistrates and others are hereby requested to deliver up to the police, alive or dead, Jack Loudon, alias Murphy, alias—and so on; the fellow has a whole string of names; who has made his escape for the second time, or give such information as shall lead to his apprehension. Then follows an exact description of his person as he was seen last. That of course he can alter, for these fellows understand how to disguise themselves. It is also stated, as a caution, or hint, that he is likely to be staying somewhere in South Australia, and will probably endeavor to make his escape from the port of Adelaide, or some other point of the coast."

"Hem—hem—hem!" said Toby, extremely ill at ease at thought of the black police. Had he suspected that these fellows were in the neighborhood, he would never have thought of speaking to the German, who, in his simplicity, might very easily betray him. His imprudence had endangered his safety. If his pursuers had any idea that he was still alive, he might rely upon it that they would not leave a single house unsearched; not a thicket in the bush unexplored, until they had discovered his tracks. He knew very well that the store-keeper himself would not betray him, as he was himself a ticket-of-leave man, and his best customers were convicts, whose vengeance in such a case he would have had to dread. This would not have repaid for any compensation the police could offer. The best thing he could, was, perhaps, to make the German, to a certain extent, his confidant as to his future plans, and deceive him as to the direction he meant to take. By this means he might gain a good start.

He was still standing by the window, irresolute, and brooding over these plans, when he saw a man coming up the street, dressed like a townsman; he wore spectacles, and Toby retreated instinctively from the small window. The less he was seen, the better it would be for him. Still, he was struck by the man's appearance, which seemed familiar to him, and he looked narrowly at him as he drew near.

"Who the devil is that, mate?" he asked the shopkeeper. "I have seen the cut of that jib before; and yet I don't recollect ever having had anything to do with a fellow wearing spectacles, except little Josey, the lawyer, who cut, and who afterward had his brains blown out by the long-legged sergeant."

"Oh, that is a Mr. Schreiber, a physician," the shopkeeper replied, on looking out of the window; "he has been spending a few days at Lischke's, the whitesmith. He called here once to buy powder and shot; he wants to stuff birds and send them to the old country."

"Dr. Schreiber!" muttered Toby, again stepping to the window. The stranger had by this time stopped in the middle of the street, but evidently without any intention of entering the house. He took off his spectacles, wiped his eyes, and turned his face toward the shop, while looking down the street. His looks met those of Toby for an instant, he turned away his head, put on his spectacles, and continued his journey.

That glance, however, had been quite sufficient for the convict, accustomed as he was to such disguises, and he recognized in the supposed German, Dr. Schreiber, his former companion, Jack Loudon. Great as his surprise was he took care not to say a syllable about it to the store-keeper. It was still possible, hunted as he was, that he might again take to the bush with his former companion; and, in that case, the less people knew about their secret the better it would be for them.

At this moment the shopkeeper's attention was taken up with the German who had chosen a few articles of dress, and began to bargain as to the price. Toby resolved to seize this moment to speak to his old companion. At any rate, as matters stood, he would not again venture into the settlement, if he missed his opportunity.

"Wait for me a minute here, mate," he said to Hohburg, thrusting his hands into his pockets, and turning to the door; "I shall be back in a minute. If this is a doctor, I should like to consult him about an old wound I have, and he may perhaps do something for it." Without waiting for an answer he left the house, and ran hastily after the supposed Dr. Schreiber.

M'Donald heard the steps behind him, but did not turn round until his pursuer was quite close, and stopped him with—"Where are you going so fast, mate?"

Surprised, M'Donald turned to the speaker, and a single look at the shy but wary Irishman showed him that he was recognized, and that further disguise was useless.

"Hallo—Jack!" continued Toby, laughing, having ascertained that nobody was in sight; while a small clump of trees stood between them and the house; "you look devilish smart and are so well disguised with your blue glasses, that an old friend and companion could scarcely recognize you. Well, how are you getting on, my good fellow? Done the blackkeys again, eh? They thought I had been food for the fishes, and left me in peace for some time; but this place is getting too hot again, and I shall have to look out for another retreat. Shall we take the trip together? To be alone in the bush is a d—d uncomfortable thing. A fellow has to be on the look-out all day, and to watch at night too; it soon settles one. Besides, it is a great deal better working in company. Well," he added, sulkily, beginning to feel uncomfortable under M'Donald's firm and steady gaze, "what is there so particular about me that you examine me as if you would look through me with those blue glasses of yours? and you let me hold out my hand, too, until my arm is getting quite stiff. What's in the wind, now?"

M'Donald had not interrupted him by a single syllable, nor had he accepted the proffered hand. He shuddered at the touch of the murderer, and he merely gazed at the criminal standing before him, who could not help quailing under his look. At last he took off his spectacles, and said, in a quiet and firm voice:

"You know well enough, I fancy, why I neither can nor will have anything to do with you."

"Nothing to do with me?" replied the convict, jeeringly. "You have grown very proud all at once, in your black coat. Perhaps you think the black blue-jackets will care about your blue spectacles. Am I any worse because I have no money to buy myself fine clothes?"

"No, certainly not," M'Donald replied calmly; "but the blood upon your hands is a stain that cannot be washed out. Good advice is lost upon you; however long the rope by which the hangman lets you roam about in the bush, be assured you will not escape. I hoped, on finding you in peaceful occupation in the bush, that you had renounced your wild and criminal career, and were resolved to become another man. I did not then know you had fled thither only to escape the consequences of a fresh murder. How you evaded your pursuers I do not and will not know; but never speak to me again! I shall not betray you, and I think I am safe from you in that respect; but I will henceforth hold no intercourse with you."

"The deuce!" exclaimed John, or Toby, with a sarcastic smile; "why, you preach as well as the best priest in the whole settlement—and is that all your friendship for an old mate? Very well; enjoy your prosperity, and let an old bush companion starve until want again drives him to crime. What do I care how soon they catch me now? such a life is worse than that of a dingo in the bush. I have no money; escape I cannot; and if I am to be hanged, I may as well die in company."

"I am not afraid of your threats," said M'Donald, gloomily, "for as long as you can keep out of the grasp of the police, you will do so. If you are really in want, I will assist you once more; but, by Heaven! this is the last time. Here," he continued, placing two pieces of gold into a hand eagerly stretched out: "buy yourself other clothes, and try to escape to the north. Workmen are wanted in the copper mines, and no one will ask you whence you come—time is all you want."

"Do you know that the black police are upon your tracks?" Toby asked his companion, watching the effect of his words, as he shook the money in his hand, before putting it into his pocket.

"I know they are," answered M'Donald, turning away; "that is my affair."

"Thank you," cried Toby, with a rude, hoarse laugh; "then we shall both of us find safety 'privatim,' as the little lawyer always said. Have you—but what is that to me?" he continued, angrily, as M'Donald, without bestowing another look upon him, walked away, leaving him standing in the middle of the road.

"I'll be hanged if that is not taking it coolly! Why, he walks along as big as if he were the governor himself! Then, that's how we stand, my good fellow, is it? and, with these two yellow-boys, you fancy you have bought off my 'friendship?' You are quite wrong, my boy—short of the mark by a good deal. If you had not been so proud, I should have told you that your warrant is nailed up yonder; but, if you will not know it, I don't care either—it is quite immaterial to me."

"What shall I do now?" he said to himself, as he walked back to the store. A hundred pounds would not be so bad, and might be earned easily enough, if I could only show myself to the rascals! The free pardon is only for ticket-of-leave men. My ticket-of-leave I wrote myself, so I shall have to keep to the hundred pounds. Yes; but how am I to manage? There is nothing to be done with the store-keeper; he must keep good friends with them or his life would not be safe. What of the other fellow, Miller? I think I must have another look at him. Now the money-chest is afloat again," he added, with an arrogant smile, striking his pocket, and making the two pieces of gold jingle. "There is nothing better than a good talent for procuring money, and it always drops at my feet, as if it fell from the clouds. That for the future," he added, with a snap of the fingers: "I begin to fancy I am proof against the whole troop. The hemp is not sown yet which shall make a rope for Red John; the bullet is not molded, and if I manage adroitly, I shall get fifty pounds in cash, and become a gentleman into the bargain, as well as Jack Loudon. So the hangman lets me run about with a long rope only because he pleases to give me a short respite? Well, we'll see, my boy, which of us will be the first victim; and I will take care I am not."

"Hallo, mate!" he exclaimed, on meeting the German, who was just leaving the house with a bundle of clothes under one arm and a loaf of bread under the other. "Off already? That won't do, mate; we must first have another glass together."

"I have not a penny left," said Hohburg, evasively; "your tobacco and brandy are paid for—that was my last money."

"At any rate, I have some," said the bush ranger, laughing, and striking his pocket; "I only wanted to test you, mate; and see whether you would leave an old comrade in the lurch without brandy or tobacco, and I am glad to find that you are such a good fellow; here, Jack, let us have a bottle of gin, but of your best, with hot water and sugar. It is a long time since I had a reeking hot tumbler of grog. Have you not such a thing as a quiet little room, where one could stay and have a chat for half an hour without being disturbed? I have something of importance to talk over with my friend here!"

"Nothing easier," said the shopkeeper, laughing, understanding his guest's anxiety not to be disturbed. "Come along; there is a small out-house with a door into the bush," he added in a whisper to the bush ranger. "I shall bring you the stuff in a minute."

"And something to eat—bread and meat, or anything else you may have."

"I will attend to it."

"I thank you heartily, mate," said Hohburg, as the store-keeper left them to get what was wanted. "But I must be off—I have not an instant to lose."

"Nonsense, man," said the bush ranger, laughing; "you won't find such good Hollands anywhere in Adelaide; and there—" he added, in a whisper, "can you in half a day gain fifty pounds?"

"Fifty pounds!" Hohburg exclaimed, with astonishment.

"Hush! not so loud," said Toby, with a furtive glance at the door, through which the host had disappeared and might return every minute.

"It is no use letting him know anything about it. He might easily do us out of the money."

"How is it to be gained?" asked Hohburg, jumping at the chance of replacing the money he had wasted, and of realizing his wife's desire in a moment; "not in an unlawful manner, I hope," he added, with caution; and, indeed, a look at the man who had made the offer fully justified such a suspicion.

"Don't be frightened, mate!" the latter replied, with a laugh; "the most tender conscience could feel at ease as to the lawfulness

of the act. The police themselves will pay you the money."

"The police!"

"Have you read that bill?" asked John, raising his thumb over his shoulder and pointing to the door.

"Yes; at least I looked at it. It offers a reward for the apprehension of a notorious bush ranger."

"Exactly," said John, laughing; "and I know where he may be found."

"You do?" Hohburg said with surprise.

"Hush, man! don't shout so. Hang it, do you want the whole neighborhood to know what we are talking about? There is Jack coming with the Hollands; if you want to earn the money, come along."

"But, it is getting dark, and I must return home."

"If you can earn more money there," John replied, with an air of indifference, "you can do so. I was not aware you had such good employment."

"Fifty pounds—"

"Are not to be thrown away, I should say. But, take a glass with me and you can consider over it, and do as you please."

"Here, mates, here is the stuff," said the host, returning at that moment; "put your things in the corner there; I will look to them."

"Fifty pounds!" muttered Hohburg, in a dream, as he passively suffered the shopkeeper to take his clothes and the loaf of bread, and followed the tempter into the small retired room, where the reeking and alluring drink already awaited him.

Meantime, with a heart growing heavier, and heavier, the poor woman awaited the return of her husband. The sun sunk beneath the horizon, and night closed upon the tranquil bush, and still he came not. The stars sparkled in the sky above, the moon shed its peaceful light on the rustling woods, and still he did not return. Again and again did she hasten to the door, when the noise of a passing wood or corn wagon broke the stillness, or when a voice was heard on the street, but it was all in vain. Her anxiously expected husband did not return, and her heart throbbed when she endeavored to think over what could have detained him.

The child asked for its supper; she was hungry; and her mother quieted her by saying that her father would soon return with the bread—but he came not. The clock struck eight, nine, and—several times she had been on the point of taking her bonnet and shawl and going down the street, in order to ascertain whether anything had befallen the weak and sickly man. At last her anxiety and impatience overcame her; it was very late, and a heavy dew was falling; so she took her child, whom she did not like to leave by herself in the solitary house, and walked with hasty steps down the street toward the shop. There she felt that she would be sure to hear what had become of her husband, and at what time he had left the place.

As she approached the place she saw a light in the shop, a wagon stood before the door, and inside she found a German peasant purchasing a quarter of a pound of tobacco. The store-keeper and his customer were the only persons in the small place. Before the woman could say a word to the store-keeper a pang shot through her heart, a hoarse laugh resounded from the room close behind, and she thought that she distinguished her husband's voice.

"Are you not going to buy some bread, mamma?" the child asked in a low timid voice.

"Yes, my dear Lizzy," she replied, as she went to the counter, upon which she laid the last shilling she possessed. The shopkeeper gave her the loaf of bread.

"Anything else, missus?" he asked, leaning both his arms upon the counter, and looking at her in a friendly manner.

Again the laugh resounded from the other room, but the question died away upon her lips, her knees trembled, and with a low "No, thank you," she left the house hastily with her child. Yet she hesitated to go home without having obtained some certainty, even should that prove to be most fearful. The peasant having purchased the tobacco, came out; he had lit his pipe, passed her with a "Good-evening," and drove slowly down the street.

"Are we going home soon, mamma?" the child inquired. "And do you think father is there now?"

"Directly, my dear child, directly," the

mother answered, in a voice stifled with anxiety.

Through the window she, at that moment caught a glance of her husband. The door opened, and Hohburg—Edward—with an empty bottle in his hand, with rigid features and glassy eyes, tottered to the counter, where the store-keeper stood looking at him, and shaking his head.

"Another bottle, mate," the drunken man stammered forth, his words interrupted, and almost made unintelligible by a hiccup, "hic! old boy—another bottle of this—hic—this famous stuff—for to-night we'll merry, merry be—hic—and to-morrow we'll be sober," he sung, at the same time striking the counter with his fist. Now, from the door behind him appeared the laughing face of Red John.

"Yes, that's all very well, my good fellow," the shop-keeper said, quietly taking the bottle; "but I have already advanced you four shillings on the clothes, and this makes seven."

"Hang it, man! Did I not an hour ago pay you seventeen for them?" stammered the drunkard. "And are they not now—hic—worth at least seven?"

"Yes, my good fellow; but I sell clothes myself, and cannot make any profit on them if I take them back at the same price."

"Oh, go to grass," said the German, with an oath; "to-morrow I shall have a—hic—have a pocketful of gold—to-morrow."

"Come now, Jack, give him another bottle," said the other, interfering; "we are engaged so pleasantly together, and you have made enough money out of us to-day."

"Made enough!" growled the shop-keeper; "well then, I'll give you another, but it will be the last. And don't make such a row in that room. It is not absolutely necessary that the whole neighborhood should know you are keeping your birthday."

"What is the matter with you, mamma?—why do you cry so?" said Lizzy, taking hold of her mother's arm, as she covered her face with her hands: "are you hurt?"

"Yes, my child—yes," sobbed the woman; "but, come," she added, with a violent effort to collect herself, "come, we will go home!"

"Will father be there, mamma?"

The woman lifted her child from the ground, pressed it convulsively to her bosom, and kissed its soft cheeks. Then she placed her on her feet again, and walked hastily and in silence toward her own solitary home.

CHAPTER XII.

DR. SPIEGEL'S SOIREE.

ON leaving Toby in the middle of the road, M'Donald walked slowly, and with apparent confidence, toward his residence. He would not let that man perceive how disagreeable the meeting was to him. But in spite of his self-possession, his heart beat quickly and anxiously as he thought of the facility with which the bush ranger had recognized him, and of the readiness, with which he had penetrated his disguise. Could he feel safe after this if he met one of his black pursuers, who were at least as sharp-sighted as the bush ranger?—and was he not consequently every moment exposed to the danger of being recognized and apprehended, or driven again into the bush?

The two horsemen he had encountered that very afternoon showed that the native police had moved their outposts as far as the place where he was, and his only chance of safety lay in the fact that none of them, not even Walker himself, could have any notion that he was well enough acquainted with the German language to live in this settlement as a German. In that case, should the slightest suspicion fall upon him he must be lost.

He had little fear of being betrayed by John, who had no associate whom he could trust, and hardly dare venture to present himself before the authorities. He had been guilty of crimes too fearful ever to hope to gain a pardon, by turning king's evidence against another, and he was certain of being hanged if by any chance he fell into the hands of the police.

In spite of all this, M'Donald felt that he must now more than ever be upon his guard, and endeavor, without exciting suspicion among his acquaintance, to avoid as much as possible every unnecessary encounter with strangers. In gaining time he gained everything; and if his pursuers once left that part of the country, it would be easy for him, recommended as he was likely to be by Dr. Spiegel, to obtain a passage on board some ship. He would only attempt as a last resource to leave

the island in a small boat. This would be a desperate plan of trying to fall in with a ship out at sea, and by this means to make his escape.

As these thoughts passed through his mind he very much regretted that he had promised to spend the evening at Dr. Spiegel's house. However, he could not well get off, as he had engaged to escort Miss Lischke to the party. Moreover, he was almost certain of meeting the German captain, and if he became better acquainted with him he might thus obtain the means of leaving the country on board his ship. No one could give him better information respecting the movements of the police than Spiegel, and under the circumstances it was absolutely necessary for him to know what they were about, that he might take his measures accordingly.

Nothing is so painful as uncertainty. As soon as we have come to a firm determination, we meet the future, however gloomy it may appear, with calmness and decision. We have made up our minds for the worst, and consequently await our destiny fearlessly, and look it boldly in the face.

The walk to Lischke's gave M'Donald time to collect his thoughts, and to decide upon the plans he was to pursue. He received Mrs. Lischke's greeting with a friendly smile. The good woman always felt a certain pride in seeing her daughter share in the parties and amusements of the "respectable people" of the town, although she could very seldom be prevailed upon to accompany her, and was, therefore, not often invited.

Susanna had already completed her toilet when M'Donald arrived, and old Lischke sat smiling on his stool by the window examining his daughter, in whom he took especial delight. Her sudden compliance with his wishes rendered her dearer in his eyes.

The party was cast in the commonplace mold of all similar affairs; and therefore needs no description.

Captain Helger, who had taken a great liking to his new acquaintance, Dr. Schreiber, chose a place at his side.

"You inquired lately with much interest after a gentleman named Hohburg, captain," said M'Donald, when the meal had commenced and the conversation was resumed; "might I ask why you take such interest in this family?"

"Certainly," replied the captain, attacking a large piece of roast veal, "it is no secret whatever. I know Hohburg very well; we were born in the same town, and were school-fellows. I was most anxious to know how his wife was getting on. Her friends in Germany are very intimate with my family, and feel anxious about her, as she has not written to them for a very long time. When they knew that I was bound for Australia, they made me promise to fathom the matter, and to bring them letters if possible. It appears, however, I shall not be able to find what has become of them; no one can give me any information, and I have even been to Tanunda, and Mount Barker in vain. Nobody in Adelaide knows anything about them. The most probable conjecture is that Hohburg moved up toward Sydney, and settled somewhere about there. I wrote on the subject a few days ago, and hope I shall receive an answer before I leave Adelaide. In case the letter should not arrive before I sail, I have asked Dr. Spiegel, to whom it will be addressed, to forward it to Germany.

"I suppose Mrs. Hohburg's family are in good circumstances?" said M'Donald.

"I should think so," replied the captain; "her brothers are wealthy merchants, ship-owners, and manufacturers; the parents are dead. They were opposed to her marriage with Hohburg, who was somewhat thoughtless; but when young people like each other, they care very little about their relatives, and have no rest until they are spliced."

"I think I can assist you in your researches," said M'Donald.

"You don't say so!" exclaimed the captain, laying down his knife and fork with surprise.

"But you must make up your mind to find her whom you thought in affluence, in the greatest misery."

"Then Mrs. Hohburg—"

"Pray do not talk so loud. The husband has fallen into the lowest state of degradation, and the wife goes out to work in order to support herself and child."

"Are you quite certain of that?"

"I am afraid it is too true; but if she is to

be assisted, it must be done in a very delicate manner. I have spoken to her."

"You know the Hohburg's?" the captain, asked, with astonishment.

"I met with them here accidentally," replied M'Donald, turning off the question, "and think I may say that I am certain they are the same persons whom you are seeking. I have not seen the man."

"But is he here?"

"His wife told me so."

"And where do they live?"

"On the way to Adelaide. You must pass by Lischke's; their dwelling is not far from his house, and any one will be able to direct you. You must only inquire for Mrs. Hohburg. As far as I know, her husband has only lately returned."

"My dear doctor," said the captain, "you cannot conceive what a favor you have done me. I am extremely obliged to you, and," he added, in a low voice, "am glad now that I came to this private lecture. It certainly is a peculiar kind of amusement, and what people on shore call 'whiling away the time.' I should have liked a game of whist much better."

At this moment the "help" came in, and beckoned to Mrs. Spiegel. The old lady rose hastily in a great fright, supposing from the frightened look of the girl that some misfortune had happened in the kitchen.

"Don't be afraid, ma'am," said the girl, "it is only—"

"Tell me, for Heaven's sake, what has happened? Are the children—"

"Dear me, how stupid you are, to be sure," said the girl; "it is only a gentleman outside asking for the doctor."

"How you have frightened me, 'Lisbeth!'"

"Why, I told you at first not to be frightened," the girl replied in her defense.

"What is the gentleman's name?"

"I don't know; he seemed to be some sort of a hoffer."

"My dear Mrs. Spiegel," was at this moment heard in English, "you must excuse me if I disturb you, or rather Mr. Spiegel, for a single instant. I was just riding by, and saw a light in your house."

"Is it you, Lieutenant Walker?" answered Mrs. Spiegel, recognizing the person by the aid of a light just brought by the servant. "Pray come in."

"Thank you; I am in a great hurry, and I only wished to speak a few words with Mr. Spiegel."

"But my husband will not let you go away again. We have a few friends with us."

"And I shall be disturbing all the company."

"Not in the least—pray walk in!"

Lieutenant Walker could not refuse such a kind invitation, so he followed the lady into the room, where the guests were assembled round the table engaged in earnest discussion. Mrs. Spiegel only made a sign to her husband, and went out again to prepare some punch for her guests.

As several of them had risen from their seats, and the conversation was waxing louder, Breyfeld had managed to make his way up to M'Donald. Taking a seat near the latter, he asked him whether he felt inclined to go upon an excursion with him to the mouth of the Murray, near Victoria lake, where they would be sure to find a great number of interesting birds, and plenty of kangaroos.

"Lieutenant Walker!" exclaimed Dr. Spiegel, in English, on recognizing the stranger, as he entered the room. "This is an unexpected, but so much more welcome, pleasure."

"I should be very sorry to disturb the company."

"No apologies, I beg. Gentlemen, I have the pleasure of introducing Lieutenant Walker to you, the commanding officer in these parts of the mounted black police—the terror of bush rangers and malefactors of all kinds. My wife and you are already well acquainted, lieutenant; then I have the pleasure of introducing to you Miss Susanna Lischke; Dr. Fiedel, our celebrated Æsculapius; Captain Helger, of the *Albertine*; Dr. Schreiber; Mr. Breyfeld, the celebrated Australian ornithologist; Mr. Schelling, the apothecary; Mrs. Smith; Mrs. Meier; the Baron Von Pick; the Rev. Dr. Meier; Mr. Tegel, one of the first contributors to the *Adelaide Journal*; Miss Meier and Mr. Smith of Saaldorf. Now you know the whole company," he added, pushing his chair back, and placing

another near it. "Pray sit down, my dear lieutenant—I hope I shall soon be able to say captain—I am heartily glad to see you. First of all things, drink a glass of wine just to wash the dust out of your mouth."

Walker turned to every one introduced to him, but the whole affair passed off so quickly, and the lights dazzled him so much, after the sudden change from the dark street, that the different persons were confused in an undistinguishable mass; he scarcely even heard their names.

It was a fortunate thing for M'Donald that he had just commenced a conversation with Breyfeld, to which he could return after a formal bow to his most dangerous enemy. He saw at once that Walker did not recognize him in his fashionable dress, and the blue spectacles, with the cropped hair and beard; and he would of course, scarcely expect to meet him here. The rest he left to the confusion of the assembly and the bustling of the host. Nevertheless the blood burned in his cheeks at hearing that name again pronounced; and it was only from the circumstance that every one turned toward the new visitor that it passed unnoticed. The next moment he had recovered his usual calmness and self-possession.

Some of the guests had risen to join the group which formed round the new visitor. It was well known that the lieutenant had come from New South Wales with part of his men in pursuit of some noted and dangerous bush rangers, who had escaped to the Adelaide district, and every one accordingly hoped to hear something interesting.

"I have a favor to ask of you," said the lieutenant, "or rather, I want your advice. One of my black fellows, an extremely sharp and cunning fellow, obstinately maintains that he has discovered, among the numerous tracks in our streets, that of one of the most desperate bush rangers, whom we had cause to think was drowned in the Murray when wounded by one of our men. I am sorry to say that he only found his track this evening, when it was too late to follow it up; but tomorrow, at break of day, he is to pursue his investigation, and see whether he was mistaken or not, and I should like to have some help at hand."

"I suppose it is Jack Loudon you are looking for?" said Dr. Spiegel.

"The one whose tracks he maintains he has found is the so called 'Red John,' a wretch who has committed innumerable murders, and who would not shrink from the most horrible crime to serve his purpose."

"A pretty neighbor, to be sure!" exclaimed Dr. Spiegel, whose surprise was not of the most pleasing nature; "and Jack Loudon is here into the bargain, too!"

"Have you seen anything of him?" exclaimed the lieutenant, eagerly.

"If not!" replied Dr. Spiegel; "but from your late information I thought he had come this way."

"We lost his track here," replied Walker.

"And have you discovered nothing since?"

"Nothing. It seems as if he had suddenly vanished from the earth. Most probably he has taken a small boat and made the mad and desperate attempt of getting on board of some vessel out at sea, and of escaping us in that manner. I should not be astonished if he had done so. However, every precaution has been taken against such an emergency. Government have just sent me two white constables, who are in my way more than they assist me. Nevertheless, I could not refuse to receive them, and quartered them, one at the Saaldorf hotel, the other in the German House to watch all new-comers. There is no police station in Saaldorf yet, although I hear there is some idea among the authorities of establishing one. I want you to support my cause as much as you can. You are well known among the Germans here, and can more easily than any one else obtain information from any quarter where a suspicious character might show himself. Will you do me this service?"

"With the greatest pleasure, my dear lieutenant," replied Spiegel, very warmly. "I am entirely at your disposal, and it would give me the greatest satisfaction to be of any use to the State, and above all to you."

"Well, it is settled then!" said Walker. "There are no strangers here at present that you know of?"

"None that I know of—excepting those that have arrived at the two hotels. There is Dr.

Schreiber, from Melbourne, whom I had the pleasure of introducing to you, and who intends establishing himself here as a physician."

"A countryman of yours?"

"Yes, a German; he lives at old Lischke's."

"The Germans, my dear doctor, do not at present interest me particularly. You must not take this amiss," he added, laughing.

"You have other men in your eye," replied the doctor, laughing. "But, now, will you not sacrifice half an hour or so? You cannot think what a favor you will be rendering us. Besides, you excited our curiosity by a few hints, your late adventure with the bush ranger—"

"Does not at all redound to my credit," said Walker, laughing, and taking his arm in order to return into the other room, "for I have failed in my endeavors to secure him."

"How was that?—Oh, Miss Lischke, you are not making preparations for going so soon? Indeed you must not leave us yet!"

"I must go home, doctor," said Susanna, putting on her shawl.

"Susanna positively refused to stay," said Mrs. Spiegel. "I have tried everything to persuade her."

"And are you going too, doctor—oh, yes, I forgot; you are Miss Lischke's companion. Can you not come back for a few minutes? I know it is rather a long walk—"

"Indeed I cannot, my dear sir," replied M'Donald, in German; "besides, it is getting late."

Walker turned round at the sound of the voice; but M'Donald bowed to the company, shook hands with Mr. and Mrs. Spiegel and Captain Helger, and left the room with the young lady, followed by Mrs. Spiegel and her mother.

"Who is that gentleman?" asked Walker, as the door closed behind them.

"It is Dr. Schreiber, whom I mentioned to you before; a very able physician, whom we have persuaded to establish himself here. Do you know him?"

"No; his face seemed familiar to me, but I must be mistaken. Where did you say he lives?"

"At Mr. Lischke's. The young lady is old Lischke's daughter. A splendid voice. A great pity she left us so early."

M'Donald heaved a deep sigh on leaving the room. The danger was as imminent as ever, and still he could see no means of escape. If he remained where he was, he must be hourly exposed to the chance of detection. If he fled, that would at once awaken suspicion, and where would he seek refuge? However, he felt again at liberty, at least for the present; and, but too well accustomed to danger, his bold spirit took courage to brave the impending storm.

While these thoughts were passing quickly through his brain, the ladies had at last finished their leave-taking. The servant girl then lighted them to the porch, but, on opening the door, started back with a loud cry; before it stood two blacks looking in with their large, white rolling eyes.

M'Donald stood close to Mahong, the most cunning of the troop—face to face—but the light was behind him, and fell full upon his enemies, who, seeing a lady and gentleman before them, stepped back hastily and courteously.

"What in Heaven's name are these?" exclaimed Susanna.

"Native police," replied M'Donald, with a smile, drawing her arm through his own. "You need not be afraid—we are perfectly safe."

The next instant they were in the dark street. The blacks looked after them, but remained at the door, waiting for their chief, and M'Donald, with Susanna, walked slowly down the still, dark street toward her father's dwelling.

CHAPTER XIII.

TREACHERY.

THE following morning ushered in an unusual stirring day for the quiet and remote little town of Saaldorf. The black police had been seen here, there, and everywhere; their dark forms were continually galloping through the streets on their foaming horses, and rumors of bush rangers circulated rapidly through the place. Before noon the most absurd and extravagant stories were whispered

from ear to ear. Large bands of bush rangers were said to be concealed in the forest ready to attack the place, the military were already on the march, and the alarm was to be given everywhere in order to call the citizens to arms. The blacks, it was said, moreover, had united with the bush rangers, and this statement was apparently confirmed by their absence from the town.

Dr. Behr alone remained in Saaldorf, and sauntered as unconcerned as ever through the streets, bareheaded, and clothed in his blue shirt. What did he care about the black police?

Lieutenant Walker had taken up his headquarters at the Saaldorf Hotel. All the morning messengers kept coming and going, and this unusual agitation attracted a swarm of the Saaldorf youth, who had assembled on the opposite side of the street, watching the proceedings with the greatest delight and loud exclamations.

"They have caught one—they have caught one," suddenly resounded through the town. People rushed to their doors and windows, and the street boys in particular, who took the most lively interest in the affair, soon surrounded a member of the black police who was bringing down the street a man in rags, with a large neglected beard, and pale anxious features.

"Jack Loudon—they have caught Jack Loudon," shouted the youth. "Hurrah! he will be hung," and the crowd near the wild couple got timidly out of their way, and standing still, followed them with their eyes.

The two men coming up the street in this manner were old acquaintances of ours; Mahong of the black police, riding at a slow pace on a horse that seemed tired out. At his side—with his damp hair matted around his temples, a face from which every drop of blood had disappeared, unsteady steps, and holding the stirrup-strap in order to support himself, walked with shy and downcast looks—Hohburg. Once or twice he seemed as if about to stop and flee from the noise and tumult which still increased around him, but the horse stepped quietly on, and he seemed to feel that he wanted the prop, and that he could not relinquish his hold.

At last they reached the Saaldorf Hotel, toward which the youth of the place immediately made a rush, running back shyly whenever one of the blacks came out to clear the street.

Hohburg seemed to hesitate whether he should enter the house, but the exclamations around him, the curious looks of the crowd directed toward him, made him at last seek it as a place of refuge.

Mahong, who had committed the man to the care of two of his comrades, went to his officer to inform him, that outside the town, near a small bush tavern, he had met with a very suspicious-looking fellow, who earnestly wanted to speak to him, stating further that he had something of great importance to communicate.

"Bring him in, Mahong," said the officer. "When these fellows fall out, or see any advantage in it, they will betray their own brothers. I think we shall hear some news of Red John, unless you were mistaken about the tracks."

The black did not reply, but returned in a few minutes with Hohburg, who, with his hat in his hand, remained standing at the door, casting a shy look at the officer.

"Hallo! who have we got here? It seems to me I know that face. Where did we see each other last, my good fellow?"

"On the Murray," replied Hohburg, in a low voice. "I was just leaving Mr. Powell's station on your arrival."

"Ah, yes! I recollect now. A certain Toby obtained your situation!"

"Yes."

"You were to tell me something about that man," said Walker, with an inquiring glance.

Hohburg looked at the officer with surprise. Toby had made him promise very solemnly, even upon oath, that he would not mention that he had seen him, affirming, as an excuse for this caution, that "he did not stand on a very good footing with the police." He was only to give information about Jack Loudon, receive the reward, and in case Toby happened to have decamped, to deposit the half with the shopkeeper, at whose house they met.

"No," he said, after a short pause, "I know nothing of Toby; but I understood that you were looking out for somebody else!"

"Jack Loudon?" Walker exclaimed, with surprise.

"Anybody who names the place of his abode, will receive one hundred pounds," continued Hohburg, cautiously, anxious to make sure of the reward.

"Yes, certainly," replied Walker, looking at the wretched figure standing before him. "You know where he is?"

"I do."

Walker rose and walked several times up and down the room with hasty strides. At last he halted before the man, gazed at him narrowly, and said:

"And who are you, if I may ask that question? Just look at yourself in that mirror! I do not believe the bush hides a more wretched, degraded looking fellow, be he bush ranger or what he may, than yourself. I should like to know to whom I am indebted for the valuable information?"

"I was hut-keeper at Mr. Powell's," replied Hohburg, with downcast eyes. "I was foolish enough to be tempted to drink on my way home, and spent all my money, and—now require more, to support my wife and child."

"You are married?" exclaimed Walker, with astonishment.

"Yes."

"You live in this neighborhood?"

"My hut is half an hour's walk from this, on the roadside."

"What is your name?"

"Hohburg."

"You were known by another name formerly, if I mistake not?"

"In the bush I called myself Miller."

"Exactly," said the officer, returning to the table where he had been sitting, and leaning with his head on his hand for a few moments. A struggle was evidently going on in his bosom. At last he said in a low, almost trembling voice, but firmly: "Speak, then—where is this Jack Loudon?"

"Here!"

"In Saaldorf?"

"Yes; and lives at the house of a man called Lischke."

"Lischke?" exclaimed the officer.

"Under the name of Dr. Schreiber," Hohburg slowly continued.

"The devil!" cried Walker, throwing the pen on the table, and starting from his seat. "I thought I knew that face. But Dr. Schreiber is a German."

"The stranger who was at Mr. Powell's speaks German almost as well as myself."

"And is this Dr. Schreiber still at that house?"

"I saw him yesterday afternoon; he wears blue spectacles, and his hair is shorter than it was when he visited the station."

"Well, leave the rest to me," said the officer, suppressing a sigh. "If what you have communicated to me be confirmed, you must call here to-morrow morning, and receive an order for—the money."

Hohburg, with his hat in his hand, stood for some moments before the officer, who regarded him with an expression of contempt. Hohburg appeared anxious to say something, but, although his lips moved, no sound escaped. At last he turned away, and slowly left the room. On arriving down-stairs, in passing the bar, he cast a wistful glance at the sparkling glasses and bottles and put his hand into the pockets of the tattered jacket. They were, however, empty, and, with his teeth firmly-set together, he turned away to leave the house.

In the street he found all the youth of the place assembled, and they immediately began pointing at him with their fingers, whispering and exclaiming, "That's he—there comes the bush ranger—look out!" He hesitated, as if unwilling to go out, and one of the blacks beckoned to him, and led him through the yard to another gate, by which he could get into the street unobserved. Hohburg followed him passively, went out by the door pointed out to him, and tottered down the street toward his own home.

The black police were soon on the alert. The sergeant was sent for by his officer, and a long conference took place between them in this room. Mahong was then summoned, and, a few minutes afterward, the troop drew up before the house. Hasty orders were given, and they galloped off in different directions. The sergeant followed more slowly in one direction, and the lieutenant, accompanied by Mahong, in another. More and more people had gradually gathered before the hotel to

learn what was going on, but no one could answer their inquiries. As the blacks had come, so they disappeared, and the curious gradually dispersed, or went into the hotel to finish the day over their beer.

The landlord, of course, made a glorious harvest of the unusual commotion.

Meantime the poor woman had passed a fearful night. No sleep visited her eyelids, and she spent the long and weary hours sitting on the bed by the side of her slumbering child, alone with her grief and sorrow.

Edward came not—hour after hour elapsed, the morning dawned, the sun rose higher and higher, and her anxiety at last compelled her to go out to look for the unfortunate man. She went again to the shop, leading her child by her hand, and made a violent effort to ask after—the man who had bought some clothes there the previous evening.

"Oh, that one?" replied the shopkeeper, examining her suspiciously for awhile. In the course of the morning he had seen the black police hovering about his house, and thought the woman was sent as a spy. "Don't know what has become of him—there is not much business to be done with such fellows. First he bought clothes as if he had his pockets full of money; he wanted them, certainly, and I let him have them at cost price; then he wanted drink, but had no money, and I was forced to take the rubbish back again. That's the way one has to get rich!"

"But, where did he go to?"

"Don't know; it's no concern of mine; are you his wife?"

The woman hesitated at first, and then answered with a low "yes."

"I thought so," growled the fellow. "Well, if he comes here again, I will send him home." With this he turned his back upon her, and went into the shop.

The poor woman wandered back to her home, as if in a dream. The child spoke to her, but she scarcely heard a word, gave no answer, and walked along in silence, with trembling limbs. It was now past noon; she gave the little one some milk and bread, but did not touch any food herself. The sun went down, and still the woman sat in her hut in silence.

At last steps were heard—they approached her door, and stopped. The woman raised her head and listened.

"Papa is coming now, and will bring some bread," said the child, clasping her mother's knees. Louisa looked anxiously at the door. There was a hand on the latch, but nothing stirred. At last the latch moved, and Hohburg, pale, and covered with dust, trembling, and casting down his eyes before his wife's inquiring glance, stood upon the threshold. Full half a minute he stood motionless in one position, and the astonished child's looks wandered from one to the other, wondering only why neither spoke, why neither stirred. At last, however, Hohburg could no longer bear it. He made a violent effort to control himself, closed the door behind him, and went to the table and supported himself against it.

"Good-day, Louisa!" he said, at the same time, in a low voice, "good-day, Lizzy! Have neither of you a word, a greeting for father?"

"Where have you been, Edward?" his wife asked, in a low and severe voice; "where is the money which I gave you? where are the clothes which you wanted to buy? where is the bread for me—for your child? Do not answer me," she interrupted him hastily, as he was about to open his lips; "do not defend yourself—do not excuse yourself—I know all. I saw with my own eyes how you squandered the last shilling which your wife and your child required for their bread! You are lost, Edward, and so are we."

"Listen to me, Louisa!" said Hohburg, as she buried her face in her hands, in an earnest voice, hoarse, and almost stifled with excitement. "Forget my past and fearful life—it ended with the scenes of yesterday. I saw the gulf on the brink of which I stood, and to which I brought you—I have escaped from it. From this day a new existence begins for me—for all of us. I will, I must, become another man, if we are not all to be lost. But I feel words alone will not satisfy you; I must prove to you that I am in earnest."

"It is too late!" replied his wife. "What you were not able to do with a vigorous body and sound mind, you cannot accomplish now with good intentions, which the wind scatters as soon as they have left your lips. Your

body is enfeebled, your spirit is broken—you are lost, lost beyond redemption."

"Not yet, Louisa! oh, not yet!" exclaimed the man. "My spirit was broken, but it is not the accursed drink, as you thought, that bent me down, and rendered me unfit for every honest occupation. A secret weight rested upon my soul, a dark shadow on my life, which has for many long years destroyed my strength, and almost driven me to madness. I will now remove the veil. You shall know the truth. I will lift from my soul the weight which oppresses it, and, with that confession, I shall not only give you the proof that I am sincere in my desire to amend my life, but that I have, at the same time, also the means of so doing."

"The means!" exclaimed the woman, who had listened to her husband's strange words with astonishment and fear. She shook her head, incredulously, and said, "What you wasted yesterday was our last resource."

"You wanted thirty pounds to set up a little business in Adelaide, free from all the cares about maintaining yourself, and—I have earned them."

"You?—how?" cried his wife, terrified as the thought rushed into her mind that, under the influence of drink, her husband might have committed a crime to obtain money.

"Be not afraid," Hohburg answered, quietly, guessing her thoughts. "Although the money has not been earned by work, for my body is enfeebled, and my spirit crushed, still it has been gained honestly. Last evening not only threw a piece of good luck in my way, but also opened my eyes as to myself. I know how I have lived until now. I knew that you despised, perhaps hated me, and that it is only the child which bound you to me. But I swear to you that from this day not a drop of brandy or wine shall ever pass my lips. I will free myself from the misery in which I have until now lived, and remove this weight from my soul, this canker from my heart, which has been gnawing it for many years—"

"I do not understand you," said the wife, with terror; "what is the matter with you? You are beside yourself."

Hohburg convulsively grasped the table against which he was compelled to support himself. His limbs trembled, his knees shook, his face was as pale as a corpse, and his eyes shone like burning coals in their deep sunken sockets. Drops of perspiration stood upon his forehead, and his long and neglected hair was matted upon his temples.

"Send the child out," he said, wiping his brow. "Send Lizzy out for a minute; she can get some flowers for you, and what I have to say to you is not for her ears."

"May I not stay with you, mamma?" asked the child, timidly, startled at her father's wild appearance.

"You can come back presently, my dear Lizzy," said her mother, kissing her forehead. "Now go out a little, and get me some of those beautiful red flowers which grow in the hedge. Bring a good many, Lizzy, and I'll make you a nice garland."

"I will pick the most beautiful I can find, mamma," said the little one, as she turned away to go out. At the threshold she stopped once more, and said, timidly, "But, papa is not going to scold you, mamma, is he?"

"No, my child, certainly not; go, now, and get me the flowers, that's a good girl."

The little one left the room.

"And now," said Mrs. Hohburg, approaching her husband anxiously, "tell me what oppresses you; let me know what causes you so much torment, for this uncertainty is worse than anything."

The man was silent, and looked steadfastly at her, and a strange light beamed in his wild, glaring eyes.

"You always wished to know," he said, at last, in a dull, hollow voice, "what drove me from Europe to Australia; what at night chased sleep from my eyes, and filled my dreams with pictures of misery. It was the same object of fear which drove me to the bottle, which made me try to drown in temporary inebriation the thoughts which gnawed at my very heart. You shall know now, but do not start away from me in horror. There dwells above us an all-merciful God, and it cannot be true that he will punish his children to the fifth and sixth generation. He will pardon—he must pardon—when the guilty one has atoned for his crime as fearfully and terribly as I have done."

The woman stood before him with her hands

folded, an image of the most abject woe. She did not interrupt her husband in his confession; but her eyes were fixed in fevered expectation on his lips, in order to catch the tale of horror.

"You know," continued Hohburg, in a trembling voice, "what a terrible circumstance broke up our family circle in Edinburgh; you know the cause of my sister's death—"

"Edward!" cried the woman, in terrified accents, and stretching her arms toward him as if to stop him.

"O'Rourke," continued Hohburg, without noticing her movement; "O'Rourke was found dead in a garden; his murderer was supposed to be Mary's affianced—"

"Edward!" exclaimed the woman, "for God's sake—"

"I must—I must," groaned her husband, covering his eyes with his hands. "The fellow had mortally offended my sister, I met him after that in the garden; my blood boiled; I scarcely knew what I was doing—he fell—"

The woman grasped the table and clung to it; and Hohburg continued, in a low voice:

"He fell by my hand. How I came into my bed," the wretched man continued, without daring to lift his eyes to his wife, "I do not even know myself: a fever confined me to it for months. Confused rumors sometimes reached my ears that the murderer had been apprehended and given up to punishment; I almost went mad, and scarcely recollected myself who had committed the murder. My sister fell ill and died at the same period; and as soon as I could leave my bed and go abroad, we removed to London. The remainder you know. I could get no rest; I left England, and placed the ocean between me and my crime. We came to Australia, but a curse rested upon me and all I undertook; money melted from my hands; I was miserable—inexpressibly miserable, and lost; but lost only until I found myself again," he exclaimed, suddenly raising himself to his full height. "Now, at this moment, I feel well and relieved. I have poured out my secret into your breast, Louisa, and henceforth we shall commence a new existence. Let it be ever so full of toil, at least I have shaken off the torture; and you, Louisa—Good God!" he suddenly exclaimed, as raising his eyes, he saw his wife's face covered with ghastly paleness, her glassy and terrified eyes fixed upon him, "what ails you, Louisa, you are dying!"

"Leave me," she said, as he stretched out his arms to support her. "It is past—it was only surprise at this fearful deed."

"You can imagine, Louisa, what I have suffered with this burden on my soul for these long, long years."

"That you *did* bear it, I cannot conceive," she replied, as she looked at him with icy coldness. "And did you never once think of your victim? Did you never inquire what became of that unfortunate man, the affianced of your sister, imprisoned in your stead?"

Hohburg remained silent, and cast his eyes upon the ground.

"And it is with that thought," continued Louisa, shuddering, "it is with that *unatoned-for* guilt upon your soul, that you wish to commence a new life. You can look at the blue heavens above you, and think God has pardoned your crime?"

"Louisa!" exclaimed the unfortunate man.

"Enough—enough! One thing more I wish to know. You spoke of money which you earned yesterday in an honest, lawful manner. Tell me by what means?"

"Government," said Hohburg, without daring to lift his eyes to the angry woman before him, "has offered a reward for the apprehension of an escaped criminal. I chanced to meet the same man in the bush, and found him again here, where he had introduced himself under a false name, and as a German."

"As Dr. Schreiber?" said the woman, in a scarcely audible voice, and her looks fell upon her husband.

"You know it?" he said, looking at her with surprise.

"A piercing laugh, more like a shriek, was the only answer."

"Louisa! for God's sake, what is this—what ails you?"

"Ha! ha! ha! ha!" cried the woman, pressing her temples with both hands, "God's judgment! God's judgment!"

"You are beside yourself!" cried Hohburg, terrified. "What is the matter with you? He is a criminal—a dangerous bush ranger, who—"

"Do you know," cried the woman, scarcely mistress of her senses, and laying her pale, almost transparent hand on her husband's shoulder, which she seized convulsively—"do you know the name of that unfortunate man? Do you know whom you have betrayed?"

"Jack Loudon," stammered Hobburg, while a peculiar horror, he scarcely knew why, made his hair stand on end. For the first time he recollected the name which he heard escape the lieutenant's lips.

"M'Donald!" screamed Louisa into his ear, "M'Donald, the affianced of Mary—the innocent convict—the most unhappy man on earth, and your victim, man,—the victim of your murder."

She waved her hand and thrust him from her. Hobburg stood still and motionless, staring at her; his eyes almost started from their sockets; his face assumed a livid hue; and as he was turning away from her, he suddenly stretched out his arms, and fell insensible to the ground.

"In Heaven's name what is the matter?" exclaimed a voice from the door, through which Lizzy entered at this instant with an armful of red and white flowers, and ran to her mother, taking refuge between her knees. "What has happened, Mrs. Hobburg—is it thus I find you?"

The woman looked at the speaker's good-natured and compassionate face for several seconds; but suddenly the recollection of former times dawned upon her; and she exclaimed, stretching her arms toward him:

"Captain Helger! God sends you to me in my greatest need. He is dying. He must not die; he must live at least to acknowledge his guilt in your presence."

"What has happened here? And is this Hobburg?—this picture of misery? Good God! can this be the man I left in Europe in wealth and happiness? What has happened? Speak—trust in me!"

"The most fearful thing that can happen," groaned the woman. "But not I—he must speak. Perhaps there may yet be time to avert the ill he has done."

"Yes; but then we must not be long about it," said the sailor, throwing away his hat, which he still held in his hand, and lifting the insensible man on the bed. Then he took a towel from a nail, and poured water upon it, in order to bathe his temples.

"If that confounded Dr. Schreiber had only come with me," he said, "we should have had a physician at hand, and the thing would be done in the twinkling of an eye; but these people are never where they are wanted."

"Dr. Schreiber?" said the woman, anxiously looking up upon hearing the name; "where is he now?—what do you know of him?"

"Where is he? How should I know? Very likely sailing about town; he was not at home when I called. Hallo! he is alive?" he suddenly exclaimed, on seeing Hobburg open his eyes, which he closed again with a sigh. "Now, if we only had a lancet, or something of the sort, to bleed him! Perhaps he will do without that; he doesn't look as if he had too much in him either! What a wreck of a man!"

When the woman saw that the captain was occupied attending to her husband, she sunk down upon the chair, near the table, and buried her face in her hands. Helger looked at her several times with an expression of commiseration, but did not speak to her, and only endeavored to restore the still miserable man.

Lizzy stood at the foot of the bed on which her father lay. She had let some of her flowers fall upon the bed, and she wept silently, watching him with anxious looks, and with her little hands folded upon her breast.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE EVENING AT THE BETROTHAL.

THE sun was sinking below the horizon, and everything in Lischke's dwelling betokened an extraordinary feast was to be celebrated. The table in the best room was laid for at least seven persons, and old Mrs. Lischke was busily engaged in the kitchen. There was nothing joyful in the house, and the members of the Lischke family walked about as if something disagreeable and annoying had happened, and as if a misfortune rather than a feast was awaiting them.

Susanna and her father were in the room. She had been weeping, and sat by the window in her mother's arm-chair. Her father paced the room with hasty strides, blowing the

smoke out of his short pipe in thick clouds toward the ceiling.

"Wait—wait!" growled he, at the same time casting an angry look at his daughter. "Why wait? I suppose you want to wait until you are an old maid—or some duke or king comes to ask for your hand—eh? That cursed Baron is the cause of all this. I wish he had never entered my house. What have you got to say against Christian Helling, eh?"

"Nothing, father," replied Susanna, timidly; "he is a kind, industrious, honest man, and I think him well disposed toward me—but—"

"But? If you know all that, what else can you desire? What but can there be?"

"I cannot fancy him as my husband," Susanna replied, in a low voice.

"No?" cried the old man, in wrathful astonishment, and stopping before her. "Did any one ever hear such evident and glaring nonsense? Not fancy him as your husband? But that hair-brained Mr. Von Pick—that corn swindler—the coal manufacturer, him you would fancy as your husband, wouldn't you? He suited you and your vain mother—to become Lady Baroness, Lady Pick, of Pick House, without having anything to pick or bite either. That would suit you, that would sound fine and grand, and we could act the great lady! Just think of the beggar, who has nowhere to hide his head, and no money to pay his debts, and be glad that an honest man asked for your hand, and will make you an honest housewife."

"I am still young, father—I can wait years before I think of taking such a step."

"Young?" growled the old man, puffing another cloud of tobacco. "Young?—stuff. If you once live to be an old maid, no one will have you. In short, I want to put a stop to all this nonsense, which will go on until some honest man takes you under his roof. If you have no other objection than that of being eighteen years of age, it is mere stuff. Moreover, your father must understand the matter better than you do."

"But if I do not love him?" said the girl, facing her father.

"Stuff and nonsense," cried he, without deigning to listen to this argument. "Love him! These are all ideas you picked up at your parties. Love him! When I married your mother we did not love each other as you call it. We had scarcely seen each other more than twice or thrice before, and yet we agreed very well afterward, and always got on very well together. Loving may be all very well with fine people, but what has a peasant to do with love! All that is required with us is that the man and woman who are about to be married should be fitted for each other; and of that matter the parents are the best judges. If your father, old Gotthelf Lischke, is satisfied with your future husband, it strikes me you ought to be so too, and thank him for it as long as you live."

"I cannot marry Christian Helling," said Susanna, suddenly rising, and walking toward her father, who looked at her with the utmost surprise. "At his side I should be the most unfortunate creature in existence, and if you really will force me, you must blame no one but yourself for the consequences."

"I am not afraid of them," replied the old man, taking his pipe out of his mouth, and pointing with it toward the daughter. "I'll run the risk, my darling. Cannot marry him! Stuff! as if marriage were a masterpiece which requires a five years' apprenticeship. Most unhappy being in existence, indeed! I'll take care you shall not be unhappy, and for that very reason you shall marry him. But why the deuce did you write the letter to him yourself, and tell him you would keep your word, and invite him? Is Christian Helling to be made a fool of, and invited and spurned at your whim or pleasure? Girl, I would advise you not to provoke me. You have got over the old woman, and turned her head, and stuffed it with vanity. But I'll put a stop to this. You shall become a good housewife, for that we brought you up; and if you—"

"To that you have not brought me up," said Susanna, perceiving that her father was becoming more and more angry, and that no hope remained. She knew that, having gone so far, the obstinate old fellow would rather break than bend. She understood that everything was lost, and that no resource remained but the last desperate step. Her father should not say that she yielded readily—that she did not to the very last moment resist his abuse of pa-

ternal authority. She had nothing to lose, and she would relieve her heart. "Not to that, father," she repeated, as her father turned round with surprise; "why should I have learned all these things—drawing, music and so on, to be the wife of a joiner, who cannot even read or write?"

"That was your mother's fault," replied the old man. "I have always opposed those things."

"You suffered it; and now, when I feel that I am destined to be something better, I am to—" She stopped suddenly, concealed her face in her hands, and burst into tears.

If anything on earth could annoy the old man, it was the sobbing of women.

"Indeed!" he said, putting his hands on his sides; "you are destined to something better than to be the wife of a joiner or peasant? And pray what is your father, you foolish and absurd thing? Am I better than a workman and a peasant, and is the blood in your veins less honest because we are your parents? Now the murder is out! I see now where this devil of pride and vanity is! The apple is already rotten to the very core, and it is high time that the bad part should be cut away, for fear the fruit itself be lost. Be off to the kitchen and help your mother, and thank God you have a father like me; and don't let me hear such a word again as your last. Bless my heart! your husband will have to work hard to get these whims out of your head which your mother put in, and God knows who else!"

Susanna quitted the room before he had half-finished the sentence, and the old man walked up and down for awhile in great wrath, as if trying to drive away unpleasant thoughts by a more rapid motion of the body.

The only guests invited besides Christian were Dr. Meier and his wife, as their daughter had been prevented from accompanying them in consequence of indisposition. They fortunately arrived at this moment, and prevented Lischke's ill-humor getting the upper hand. He knew the clergyman to be an honest, enlightened man, and liked him accordingly; and of Mrs. Meier he had often spoken to his own wife as a model which she should seek to follow.

"Well, Christian," said Lischke, when the youth at last entered the room, after having looked in vain for Susanna in the passage, "You are rather late, my boy, but you are right—it is a work-day, and business before everything else."

The old man then proceeded to inform the company that he had assembled them to be witnesses of the betrothal of Susanna and Christian. The daughter burst into tears and fell weeping on her fond mother's breast, and the two hastily retired to an adjoining room, much to the displeasure of the old whitesmith.

"Coo-hee!" resounded clearly and distinctly and seemed to come from the opposite meadow.

Susanna started, and all her limbs trembled. "Father!" she exclaimed, freeing herself from the old lady, and coming in to him.

"You are a good child!" he said, without paying any more attention to the noise he had just heard. He nodded to his daughter in a friendly manner, but at the same time with a decided look, as much as to say he allowed of no contradiction. He added, turning to his future son-in-law, "Come here, my boy; give me your hand, and you, Susanna—but what is the matter with the girl?"

"Mother!" the latter exclaimed, throwing her arms round the old woman's neck, and kissing her. "Mother!"

"Come, my child," said the latter, with an anxious and trembling voice; "but why must you hurry things so, Lischke? You torment and terrify the poor girl."

"Oh, nonsense!" growled the old man. "What is the use of long ceremonies? Well!" he added, with astonishment, when suddenly Susanna, after having once more embraced her mother, rushed out and closed the door behind her. "That will never do!" he exclaimed, and was going to follow her; but Christian stopped him, and said in a kind tone:

"Pray, father, give her time to collect herself. You have frightened the poor girl—it was too hasty and sudden. After awhile mother can go to her, and Susanna will then be quiet and more collected."

"But I cannot bear such affectation," said the old man, with vexation; "she is a peasant's daughter, and nothing else, and she acts as if she were—God knows what!"

"You must not hurry your child," the pas-

tor Meier remarked kindly, to the old man; "give her time. So important a step must not be taken in haste."

"Well, I do not mind," replied the old man, with constrained good-humor; "but I do not see why—"

"What is that?" cried Christian, who had all the time been struggling within himself, doubtful whether or not he should follow Susanna. "What is all that noise and shouting?"

The little party listened to the sounds and shouts which reached them, and seemed to be quite close at hand. Yells like those of the savages were heard, while the watch-dog tore like mad at his chain. A sudden and shrill whistle resounded amid the noise, almost under the windows.

"I must see what is going on," said old Lischke, taking a double-barreled gun from the wall. He sometimes used it to shoot vermin, which came into his fields and garden, and it was always kept loaded. "There, Christian, you take that sword which hangs behind the door, against the bed; one cannot tell what is going on, and the barn is close to the street."

"Pray, father, stay here!" said Mrs. Lischke, taking hold of her husband's arm; "if the blacks should—"

"Oh, nonsense!" growled the old man, extricating himself from her grasp; "there are plenty of police about, and we have nothing to fear. One cannot tell what they may be doing to the garden or to the fences, and I must see to it, Christian!"

Old Lischke, with his gun under his arm, followed by Christian and pastor Meier, went out of the house. They at once perceived that the noise was at some distance further up the road. A crowd had apparently assembled. Without thinking much about it they walked hastily toward the spot.

We left Red John in the store-keeper's parlor, where, by the assistance of Hohburg, and the betrayal of his former companion, he expected to obtain sufficient to carry him through all his difficulties. All he wanted was money. Money he must have by some means, and he fully believed that what he desired was almost within his grasp.

He knew very well that he played a dangerous game in betraying his companion, and that he thereby partially placed himself in Miller's hands. He took his measures accordingly, and arranged with Miller that he should leave his share of the reward at the store-keeper's, stating that he would call for it at a convenient opportunity.

Red John had not seen any of the black police during his short stay in the German settlement, nor did he entertain the least desire to do so. In accordance with this plan he spent the night in the bush, which commenced close behind the house, and he remained there until the morning.

His suspicions were aroused by a white man who several times in the course of the day visited the shop, apparently to buy something, although he always stayed longer than was necessary for such a purpose. The man was dressed in the ordinary costume, but John had far too practiced an eye not to recognize in him, at first sight, a constable in disguise.

It was therefore evident that he was no longer safe.

Accordingly he concealed himself in the bush till darkness should set in. Just at dark he was about crossing the hedge into the high road, when he perceived a coach driven slowly backward and forward past him. Accosting the driver, he soon learned his errand. He had been engaged, by Von Pick. Red John invited the coachman to alight and take a drink from his flask. Jehu couldn't refuse. Was a coachman ever known to refuse a glass? Red John, watching his opportunity, dealt the unsuspecting man a terrific blow, that felled him senseless to the ground. The fellow then dressed himself in his victim's garb, mounted the box, and drove slowly in the direction of Lischke's house.

Von Pick glided to the fence, listened for an instant, and then putting his hands to his mouth in the shape of a funnel, gave the agreed-upon signal, a loud "coo-hee." This done, he hastened to the garden-gate, opened it, and listened in breathless expectation in the direction of the path which led to the house.

"My dear, dear child—"

"Away! away!" cried Susanna, approaching from the house, "I will follow you wherever you like. I will not, I cannot marry this man!"

"Everything is ready," whispered Von Pick, running to the gate, leading Susan to the carriage.

Without making any answer, the trembling fugitive followed him, slipped out of the garden, sprung into the carriage, and threw herself in a corner, with a handkerchief over her eyes.

"Go on, my good fellow," said Von Pick, to the coachman, as he followed Susanna into the carriage and closed the door.

Suddenly a not very loud but shrill whistle was heard through the darkness just before the horses' heads, and the animals shied and started back.

At the same moment three or four dark forms rushed to the heads of the horses, while others came out right and left, and placed themselves at both sides of the carriage.

"Stop, in the name of the Queen!" said a stern and commanding voice. "If you stir a step, we shall bring you off your box quickly enough."

"Who is there? What do they want with us?" asked Von Pick, putting his head out of the window. "This must be a mistake."

"Back!" a voice thundered out to him, and he distinctly heard the click of a trigger.

"What is the matter here—what is going on?" cried several people, almost with one voice.

"Father!" said Susanna, almost breathless; and Von Pick, in a subdued but angry voice, observed:

"Are you already anxious to return to him?"

"Bring the torches here," the sergeant cried, impatiently; "the voice sounds so precious strange."

Four of the black police hurried to the spot, with their flaming torches—two at the right and two at the left side of the carriage.

"The devil!" cried the old soldier, with by no means a pleasing look at Von Pick, who was thus caught in the trap. "It is not Jack London, after all, and there is a lady with him, sure enough, my men."

"What is going on here? What is all this commotion about?" said Lischke, who had managed to get near enough to recognize, by the light of the torches the pale countenance of Von Pick, although the latter, on hearing the voice, had fallen back into the carriage with the rapidity of lightning.

"Only a mistake," the old sergeant growled, discontentedly, "which has very likely spoiled the business. A gentleman and a lady—"

"A lady?" exclaimed the old man, feeling as if an icy hand had seized and crushed his heart. "A lady? and that knave with her? A light here! a light!"

With trembling hands, and unconscious of what he was doing, only feeling the horrible and choking sensation at his heart, he gave his gun to the parson to hold, and took one of the torches from the black standing at his side. The light fell upon the shrinking form of his daughter, who dared not meet her father's gaze, and covered her face with her handkerchief.

The old man uttered not a word; but stood a few seconds, pale and motionless, and looked wildly at his unhappy and lost child. Indeed, he scarcely saw the wretched figure of Von Pick, who had retreated as far as possible in the corner of the carriage, wishing himself anywhere, to escape this unpleasant position. Another man, crushed and broken-hearted, witnessed the scene; need we say that this was Christian?

"Stop! stop!" cried Susanna, rushing past Von Pick, who did not offer to detain her. The sergeant, who stood by the door, opened it, and Susanna jumped out.

"Father!" she cried, with an expression of heartrending sorrow in her voice—"father!" and she tried to throw her arms round his neck. The old man turned away, and pushed her from him, not harshly, but with firmness. He would not allow his daughter even to lean upon his shoulder.

"I have no child," he said, in a low voice, giving the torch to a black standing near him; and having done this, he walked with a slow and firm step back to the house.

"Come, Susanna; come to your mother," said the pastor, to the poor girl, who stood the picture of misery and despair in the road. He drew her arm within his, and led her back to the house, whither Christian Helling followed, with seeming reluctance.

The torch bearers next turned their attention toward the coachman on the box.

On the evening in question they had been posted by their lieutenant before Lischke's house, with strict orders to stop everybody coming out of the same, while they were not to interfere with any persons entering. At eleven o'clock all the entrances were to be suddenly occupied; and by this maneuver Walker hoped to secure McDonald, who had kept away from the house during the day.

Mabong, who was holding one of them, more from his old habit of leaving nothing unexamined which presented itself to him, than from any definite suspicion, had several times endeavored, but in vain, to bring the light of his torch to bear upon the face of the coachman. With this object in view he held the flaming torch as high as he could; shaded his eyes with his left hand, which was disengaged, and looked at John. John, who had his own particular reasons for not allowing him to see more of his face than he could possibly avoid, drew his head into the high collar of his coat, which he had turned up round his neck, and pulled his hat over his brows.

"Look out there," the coachman shouted, foaming with rage at the idea of having run into danger in so stupid a manner, "if you cannot let an honest man alone, look out for the consequences. Just mind the horses. When I get off the box they always start—make room there!"

Two of the blacks went to the horses' heads, and the others drew back a little to let the man jump down. John determined to seize upon this opportunity, the last, as he concluded, of escape. Before getting off the box he took the whip in his hand. He jumped down, and, leaping up again immediately, struck the nearest man who stood in his way a blow on the face with the butt-end of his heavy whip, and bounded toward the garden gate. In the dark garden, full of bushes and winding paths, he might easily have escaped; and his sudden attack took the blacks so completely by surprise that the fugitive was enabled to reach the garden gate, against which he dashed with all his weight. His usual luck, however, failed him; the gate opened to the road, and a short but strong stake driven into the ground inside, resisted the first shock. The next instant, before he had time to break the gate open, two of the blacks rushed upon him; one struck him a violent blow on the head with a heavy torch, making the sparks fly in all directions, and another seized him by the collar and pulled him back.

The bush ranger, driven to desperation, drew a knife he had concealed to cut his way through his assailants; but before he could use it he was seized, and in a few seconds brought to the ground, overcome and powerless.

"Ah!" exclaimed the sergeant, while the prisoner, in spite of the terrible odds brought to bear against him, defended himself desperately with arms, legs, and teeth, "the fellow has shown his sting! Bring a torch and let us see who the fellow is. It cannot be Jack London?"

"Red John!" exclaimed Mabong, with astonishment—"Red John!"

"Very well; secure his feet well, and throw him into the carriage. One of you sit by him, and another drive to the Saaldorf Hotel, where you will watch him until I return. I need not tell you to keep a sharp look-out. Stop; what noise is that?" he said, suddenly pausing, and listening attentively.

The sound of hoofs was heard on the road. A rider came galloping along, and stopped by the group. It was Lieutenant Walker.

"What is the matter?" he exclaimed, hastily; "whom have you got there?"

"Red John, sir; we found him on the top of that coach-box," the sergeant replied, with his hand to his cap.

"Ah! very well; has anything else happened?"

"No, sir; we have taken the wrong bird, but he will prove no bad catch, either, and I was just going to place my men out again."

"It is no longer necessary," the lieutenant replied. "Draw your men off, and let them keep quiet."

"Very well, sir."

"Mahong, here!"

"Sir!" exclaimed the black, hastening up to his officer.

"Take my horse; I will follow on foot; mind you keep a good watch over the prisoner."

Having said this, the lieutenant dismounted, gave the reins to the black, and watched his men as they placed the bush ranger, bound

hand and foot, into the carriage. Then the procession set off, with the torch-bearers at the head and sides, and soon disappeared behind the hedges and houses of the little town, which commenced at this spot.

CHAPTER XV.

THE PURSUER AND THE PURSUED.

THIS evening, intended as a feast of joy at Lischke's house, was turned into sorrow and bitter grief.

Old Lischke stood in the middle of the room, with both hands upon the table, his hat still pressed upon his brow exactly as it had been when he entered, and he gazed in silence at the ground. His daughter hung upon her mother's neck, sobbing in shame and repentance, and seeking to conceal her face on the maternal bosom.

Christian went to the door, and returned in a few minutes, followed by Lieutenant Walker.

"Excuse my disturbing you," said the lieutenant; "I wished to see Dr. Schreiber upon very urgent business."

On hearing the strange voice, old Lischke looked up and said:

"He is not at home, but we expect him every minute. He promised to be back by nine o'clock at the latest."

"Will you allow me to wait for him in his room?"

"Pray, Christian," said the old man, without rising from his chair, "tell the girl to take the gentleman to Dr. Schreiber's room, and light his lamp."

"I am much obliged to you. Good-evening, gentlemen!" said the stranger, as he left the room with Christian.

The pastor regarded for a few seconds the almost broken-hearted father; he went up to him, and, laying his hand on his shoulder, said, in a kind voice:

"I leave you now alone with your God. But consider that you are a father; that it was your daughter whose foot slipped from the path of virtue. It is your duty to hold out your hand to her that she may not fall." Having uttered this, the pastor quitted the room, and, soon after, accompanied by his wife and Christian, left the house of sorrow.

Lieutenant Walker sat at the window of M'Donald's room, with his arms crossed on his breast, and looking up in silence and meditation at the Southern Cross, which shone brightly in the firmament. Time passed rapidly—an hour he remained in his posture, without giving a sign of impatience. Below all was silent, and most of the lights which had first cast their rays on the fences, were put out. Nothing stirred—the stillness of death reigned in the house, and nothing was heard but the monotonous ticking of an old German clock, which, with its regular and loud motions seemed to cut time into small pieces.

The lamp, covered with a dark shade, shed a subdued light over the room. Suddenly steps were heard in the street. The lieutenant listened; they came nearer, and stopped before the house. He could distinctly hear the key in the lock, the door open and shut again, and the steps of some one passing through the dark passage and ascending the stairs.

The lieutenant stood up, but remained by the window. A hand was laid on the latch—the door opened, and M'Donald entered.

He looked pale and fatigued, but perfectly calm, and, without perceiving the stranger, went to the lamp, lifted the shade, and raised the wick.

"Good-evening, M'Donald," said the deep and sonorous voice of Lieutenant Walker; and M'Donald, on hearing these sounds, started back, as if stung by an adder. The surprise lasted only a moment. With his left hand he turned the shade of the lamp so as to throw the full light upon the countenance of his antagonist, and with the right he drew a double-barreled pistol from his pocket, cocked it, and said, in a quiet voice, but choked with suppressed emotion:

"Lieutenant Walker, you have attained your aim; but probably in a sense different from that you expect. You have ventured within the power of a desperate man and must bear the consequence. For my own part I am tired of this life. Hunted, pursued like a wild beast, with the blood-hounds on its track, night and day—who would wish to live thus?"

Lieutenant Walker listened to him quietly, with his arms still crossed upon his breast. At last he said:

"What if I did not come as an enemy—if I brought you peace and quietness, M'Donald?"

"Those are only to be found in the grave!" the unfortunate man replied, in a hollow voice.

"Put down your weapon, sir," continued Walker, in an almost friendly voice. "I am alone; my men are not in the neighborhood, although they were lying in ambush round the house for an hour or two."

"Betrayed, after all, then," said M'Donald, with a bitter smile.

"You have no cause to complain of that," replied Walker, laughing. "Do not look at me so gloomily. If my heart were not at this moment light and glad—if I brought you only imprisonment and fresh tortures—I should certainly not be laughing. But, to-morrow's sun will find you a happier man. I bring you life and liberty."

"You?" exclaimed M'Donald, with astonishment, yet not without suspicion.

"It may appear strange to you," said Walker, laughing, "that a lieutenant of the police should engage in such, I might say, negative occupations; but such is the case, nevertheless. But—" he added, suddenly, in a frank manner, "be assured, M'Donald, that, from the day when we fought side by side against the blacks, I felt you were a different man from what the world supposed. From that day it was with reluctance that I fulfilled my duty. I certainly endeavored to execute it because it was my duty."

"I do not understand you," said M'Donald, astonished at the extraordinary conduct of the man.

"I will no longer keep you in suspense. Let us sit down!" he added, as, unbuckling his sabbat, he placed it in a corner, drew a chair to the table, and sat down. M'Donald, who still held the pistol in his hand, laid it upon a chest of drawers, locked the door, to guard against any surprise, and also sat down to the table.

"Still suspicious!" observed Walker, laughing. "But—you are right. I have hitherto done nothing to entitle me to your confidence. Listen to me quietly; the sequel of my short narration will perhaps give you a better opinion of me."

"We met yesterday for the second time, in company," the lieutenant commenced, with a smile; "and I must confess the blue spectacles and your German entirely deceived me. I had no notion you were so well acquainted with a foreign tongue, although your figure and appearance seemed familiar to me. This morning an old acquaintance of ours, allured by the hundred pounds' reward offered for your apprehension, disclosed to me that Dr. Schreiber at Lischke's, was no other than the notorious Jack Loudon."

"Red John!" exclaimed M'Donald, with a smile of contempt.

"Not exactly, although I have since heard that gentleman had a hand in the affair. We caught him this evening, and he will soon get his richly-merited reward—the gallows. No; the informer was once a but-keeper upon Mr. Powell's station, who was known there under the name of Miller, but whose real name is Hobburg."

"Hobburg!" exclaimed M'Donald, starting from his chair with horror. "That was Miller! Now I understand why that face seemed so familiar to me, and the strange and inexplicable feeling which always came over me when I looked into those eyes!"

"Pray sit still!" said the lieutenant; "you will hear things stranger still. The fellow looked horrible, with his matted hair, pale face, deep-sunken eyes, and trembling limbs—indeed, the very image of one ruined by drink. I was bound to make use of the information, M'Donald; but I give you my word that I would sooner have struck the informer to the ground than arrest you. I therefore issued my orders, sent a constable here in disguise to inquire after you, and surrounded the house, which was to have been searched by my men somewhere about this time. I committed to my sergeant the execution of the enterprise, as I did not wish to have anything further to do with it myself."

"And now?"

"I have sent my men to their quarters, and come to talk over with you the events of this day. Listen. I thought you were under the penalty of law, but I also thought that you were not to be classed with ordinary criminals. Not wishing to see you after you had been arrested, toward evening I rode out of Saaldorf,

in order to pay a visit to the magistrate of the next town, intending to return to-morrow morning, when all should, as I hoped, be over. On my way, at a short distance off, I passed a small house, which stands alone by the roadside, nestling in the bush. Hearing wild and heart-rending cries, I stopped my horse. The next instant the thought struck me that my men had maintained; they had come upon the tracks of Red John in this neighborhood. The cry of terror inside was perhaps, I thought, his work; and, turning my horse, I sprang out of the saddle, threw the reins over a bush, took the pistols out of the holsters, and rushed to the door of the hut. I found my weapons were not wanted, but my presence was the more opportune."

"In the middle of the poor but clean room a man was stretched out upon a mattress. This was Miller, or Hobburg, in a state of madness. A pale woman sat in the corner of the room, with clasped hands and fixed looks, and a man, the captain of a German ship in the port of Adelaide, was kneeling by his side. The woman did not even notice my sudden entrance with pistols in my hands. Her eyes wandered meaningless past me, and were again fixed upon the ground. The captain seemed delighted at my arrival, and, in a fearful state of agitation, he took hold of my hand and led me to the couch of the unfortunate man."

"M'Donald," continued Walker, after a short pause, during which he appeared agitated in an unusual manner, "I will no longer keep you on the rack. You were transported for the murder of an Irish gentleman. Do not interrupt me—I this evening took the dispositions of the real murderer, who acknowledged his crime."

"Hobburg!" cried M'Donald, horror-stricken. "Good God!"

"Stung with remorse," Walker continued, with emotion, "and feeling the approach of death, he acknowledged in my presence and that of the German, his crime, and—your innocence. Then he tried to rise, to go to Adelaide and give himself up to justice; but his enfeebled body was completely exhausted. He sunk back upon the couch and died, uttering curses, in the arms of the captain."

"Horrible!" exclaimed M'Donald, covering his face with his hands.

"The monster, who in cold blood brought ruin and misery upon you, does not deserve your compassion," Walter said gloomily. "The demon drink, to which he devoted himself, has saved him from the gallows, which he deserved a thousand times more than even that tenfold assassin, Red John."

"And the poor, poor woman—"

"She may thank God that she is delivered from the bonds which bound her to such a wretch. She is now in safe hands. The kind captain has charge of her and the child. He tells me he is well acquainted with her family, and that he intends to take her back to Germany. He requested me to ask you not to go and see her in her present state. The last fearful scene has produced such an impression upon her that any new emotion, which your presence could not fail to excite, might prove highly prejudicial. Leave her to time and to the captain's care. Besides," he added, with a smile, "I should think the favorable change that has taken place in your own affairs will afford you sufficient occupation."

"It seems like a dream to me. My head turns dizzy when I think of it," said M'Donald, pressing his temples with his hands.

"Then I will think for you," said Walker, laughing. "You must first of all accompany me to Sydney, to which place I shall return by the first ship, as my mission here is performed. The sergeant will return with the troop overland through Melbourne."

"To prison!" M'Donald exclaimed in anguish.

"In very easy custody," replied the officer, with a smile. "Captain Helger, as he is called, will, I think, touch at Sydney with his ship, and our joint testimony will be sufficient to obtain your liberation on parole, until an answer can arrive from England. There can now be no doubt that an immediate pardon will be granted. Then," he added, with a smile, when that is done, I shall be ready to give the free man any satisfaction he may like to demand for the trick I was obliged to play him on the Murray."

"Walker!" exclaimed M'Donald, jumping up from his chair, and seizing the lieutenant's hand, "you are a man of honor, and my hand

shall wither before it shall ever be raised against you!"

"For your sake, M'Donald," replied the lieutenant, shaking the proffered hand heartily, "be assured that this moment is one of the happiest of my life, and that I hope we shall become good and true friends. And now, good-night! Of course it is not necessary for any one at Saaldorf to know that Dr. Schreiber is only an assumed name. You must even, for the short time that we remain here, wear the blue spectacles. Call upon me to-morrow morning, at ten o'clock at the Saaldorf hotel. The captain will be there, and we can then settle what is to be done."

The two friends parted. The lieutenant cast another glance at the house, as he was going down the street. A dull light was burning in the room upon the ground floor, in which old Lischke was still seated in his arm-chair by the window, with his head resting upon his hand, in precisely the same attitude as the visitor had found him two hours before. He did not even stir when the house door was opened and closed again—very probably he did not hear the noise, for the bright and big tears trickled through the old man's quivering fingers and fell upon his knees.

CHAPTER XVI. THE RETURN.

FIFTEEN months had passed away; the winter rains had refreshed the lands, and young grass was shooting forth luxuriantly. Everything looked fresh and blooming, and even the monotonous gum-trees appeared to be full of sap, and seemed vigorous after the refreshing showers.

Three horsemen came galloping along the road from Adelaide, stopped at the Saaldorf Hotel, and vaulted from their saddles. Two of the travelers were white men, the third was a black, who held the horses while the others entered the parlor of the hotel to take a glass of wine. They found but one guest, sitting before a pot of beer, in the room. On hearing the strangers enter, he turned round slowly to have a look at them; then jumped up quickly from his chair, and ran to meet them and give them welcome.

"Bless me!" he exclaimed, "Lieutenant Walker, where, in all the world, have you been this long time?"

"At Sydney, my dear Dr. Spiegel!" replied the officer, "and I am heartily glad to see you again. Allow me to have the pleasure of introducing myself to you as a captain."

"I wish you joy, with all my heart—"

"Can you tell me, doctor, how Mr. Lischke's family are getting on? The poor people were in great sorrow when I left them," said M'Donald.

Spiegel looked grave and shook his head. "Very badly," he at last replied; "very badly. That was a very sad affair; and that Mr. Von Pick, who stole away the night that it occurred, was a worthless fellow and a common swindler. He abused my confidence in the most scandalous manner; but treated the Lischkes, and particularly poor Helling, most shamefully. Poor Christian took the affair so much to heart, that he has since avoided every one—sees no one, and seems to be out of his mind. Susanna left her parents' roof, and went to reside with some relations at Hahndorf; and old Lischke looks quite ten years older than he did before the affair."

"But, gentlemen," he said, on seeing the two travelers empty their glasses and prepare to start, "you are not going away again so soon? I cannot allow that, on any account."

"You must excuse us this time, my dear doctor," Walker replied, with a friendly smile; "on our way back we expect to make a longer stay here. We have not yet forgotten our old friends, and hope shortly once more to enjoy their society."

The horses were brought, and the riders soon got into their saddles.

"By-the-by!" Dr. Spiegel called after them, "I suppose you know that Captain Helger took Mrs. Hobburg and her child to Europe? The captain behaved very nobly, and is a most worthy man."

"We heard something about it," replied Walker steadying himself in the saddle.

Once more the horsemen waved their hands, and disappeared round the corner of the street.

They soon left the little town behind them, and rode briskly and merrily along the road, which led, north-east, over Tanunda and through Angas Park, toward the Murray. At

Tanunda they stayed the night, and on the following evening they reached Miranda, on the Murray, whence they followed the upward current of the river.

Mahong was riding in advance, in order to pick out the best path, and the two white men followed him slowly.

"Walker!" said M'Donald, suddenly, after a short pause, "you must allow me to ask you one question, which has long been tormenting me, and which I never yet had the courage to ask you."

"What is it?" the officer asked, with a smile, turning toward him.

"Since we met at that German's house," replied M'Donald, "you have always proved yourself a true and faithful friend. I am indebted to you, I know full well, for the speedy and favorable answer from England, and for the good treatment of those who, until then, considered me as a prisoner."

"Did you not merit all this for the numerous sufferings to which you had so long been unjustly exposed?"

"That makes no difference," replied M'Donald. "I only mention this to show you how much I feel indebted to you—how anxious I am to repay you for your kindness, and how willingly I should keep from you everything, the remembrance of which might be disagreeable to you; and now—"

"I am riding with you to the same spot," Walker interrupted him, laughingly, although his open and good-natured features were suffused with a deeper red—"where I got myself rejected just a year and a half ago, and where I have at present no greater prospect of success than before. Is that what you wished to say?"

"No, not exactly in those words, Walker."

"Bah! it is all the same," said the officer, laughing. "That was the sense; and in one way you are right; but," he added, gravely, and with his eyes growing brighter, "there was another ground which led me to ask leave of absence, and I do not see why I should conceal it. That evening, M'Donald, when I took you a prisoner from the family circle dear to me—that evening—I may tell you now—has since been a thorn in my heart. I knew very well I could not act otherwise: I only did my duty; but Sarah thought differently; I felt too plainly, too painfully, that she ascribed my action to the jealousy of a fortunate rival, and how she must despise me. I will bear this no longer. Although I cannot gain her love, I shall win back her esteem. You see," added the young man, as M'Donald silently took his hand and pressed it, "that it is not only my friendship for you, but also my selfishness, that has brought me here. The whole family bated me for taking away one who had become endeared to all of them; is it not my duty to restore him back to them, and get in exchange at least a kind look?"

"You wrong the Powells!" said M'Donald. "Do you think they have forgotten your noble devotion, when, at the peril of your own life, you saved Lisbeth; and afterward, with real contempt of death, threw yourself into the very thickest of those black demons? I will grant that in the first moment, the Powells were perhaps less kindly disposed toward you; but after calm consideration, they could not fail to perceive that you were right, and acknowledge that, forced as you were, by necessity, you did nothing but your duty."

Walker looked down as if in a dream. He suddenly passed his hand over his brow, as if he wanted to drive the sad thoughts away, and said to his friend, with a frank and open expression of countenance:

"We will hope the best, M'Donald. Although no such sweet welcome awaits me as you may expect, yet I shall be heartily rejoiced to see the kind people again, after such a long absence, and under more cheerful circumstances. I think my presence here proves to you that I do not envy your happiness."

CONCLUSION.

THE sun was sinking behind the tops of the malley bushes; the trembling lights and shadows which it cast on their red stalks and bright green leaves, imparted to them a charm not always found in the Australian bush.

"There lies the station," said Walker, pointing with his left hand.

"And there!" exclaimed M'Donald.

"What?—where?" asked Walker; "ha! by heavens!" he added, reining in his horse, "the young ladies, and just at the very place,

M'Donald, where I once met you so earnestly engaged in conversation with Miss Sarah."

They hastily dismounted, and giving the bridles to Mahong, hastened to the young ladies.

Walker was right: the place was the same, although much altered since he had seen it last. It had become Sarah's favorite spot, and many a sweet and sad hour had she spent here alone, or in the company of her sister.

Lisbeth reclined against the trunk of the gum-tree, and gazed at the rapid and swollen stream, while Sarah, who was sitting upon the form, turned over the leaves of a book lying in her lap; at last she closed the volume, and seemed lost in thought, as she looked at the old bullet-mark on the binding.

"You must know 'Lalla Rookh' by heart, by this time," said Lisbeth, turning to her with a smile; "you have been studying it the whole year, as if you intended to learn every line. But there are strangers coming."

"Lieutenant Walker!" cried Lisbeth, as pale as death—"Lieutenant Walker, and—"

"Captain Walker, if you will allow me," said the young man, smiling, and making a slight bow; "and here," he added, turning round, and taking the hand of M'Donald, who followed close behind, "is an old friend of your house, whom I took from you for a short time only to restore strengthened in body and spirit. By heavens, M'Donald, have you lost your powers of speech, that you let me deliver the address quite alone?"

"M'Donald!" exclaimed Lisbeth with amazement, and quite bewildered; her glance went from him to her sister, who was supporting herself against the gum-tree, trembling, and unable to utter a word.

M'Donald was at her side in an instant.

"Sarah—my dear, dear Sarah!" he whispered to her, placing his arm round her slender and tottering frame, and supporting her.

"Are you still angry with me, Miss Lisbeth?" said Walker, drawing, without ceremony, the arm of the astonished young lady within his own, and walking toward the house without taking any further notice of the other pair.

"I was very angry with you," said Lisbeth, endeavoring to get her arm free; but Walker would not loose his hold.

"You are not angry now, are you?"

"There comes father!" Lisbeth exclaimed, suddenly pointing to the spot where old Mr. Powell, who had seen the horses, was advancing to meet the guests.

"A sight which does one's heart good!" said Walker, letting go the young lady's arm, and advancing toward Mr. Powell. "It is rather uncertain whether I shall meet with a very friendly reception from my kind host of former times."

"Mr. Walker!" exclaimed Mr. Powell, stopping short with surprise and almost dismay; "and there—am I dreaming or awake?—M'Donald, the bush ranger, in your company!—here?"

"Father, dear father!" cried Sarah, hastening toward her father, and burying her beautiful face radiant with joy and happiness, on his bosom.

"My child, my dear child!" said the old man, his voice trembling with emotion; "but how is all this? To whom are we indebted for this joy?"

Sarah did not reply, but she stretched out her hand to Walker, who seized it and gratefully carried it to his lips.

Night, sparkling with myriads of stars, covered the forest. The babbling river flowed along beneath the whispering gum-trees; in the bush resounded the wild howl of the dingo. But through the fragrant bushes, which surrounded the squatter's house, the windows shone brightly and merrily, casting their long and narrow reflection over yard, and fence, and bush. Then, in the cheerful room of the newly built house, standing on the old round table, on which purved and sung the tea-urn, blowing the wreaths of steam into the air, the high lamp shed its mild light on none but happy faces. They sat and talked, and asked, and narrated, and could not hear enough of each other. They enjoyed the hour which God's paternal mercy had blessed them with in recompense for long sufferings. The sorrow which they had endured melted in a short moment, during which—dark and sad as it had been—their happiness had taken root, and grown up into a beautiful and fruitful tree.

Walker, much as he rejoiced at M'Donald's happiness, still required some time to combat many an old and painful recollection which might have troubled his peace. It was well for him that he found, at the same time, a new talisman, which helped him so much sooner to overcome these feelings.

'Lisbeth knew from her sister—and she had also perceived herself—the hopes he had formerly entertained. The more exasperated she was at first at his conduct toward M'Donald, the more his true and generous friendship toward the fortunate rival raised him in her estimation. In the first instance he had acted as his duty required; in the latter, as a free man; and as in the former instance he showed his courage, so, in the latter, did he prove his kind and generous heart.

The two friends had intended to spend a few days at the station, and then return to Adelaide; but weeks passed before they thought of their departure.

At last, when M'Donald, provided with all the means to commence a happy existence, asked Sarah's parents for her hand, he was joyfully accepted by them as their son. Walker remained silent, and once more, for the last time, a pang of sadness shot through his heart. A few hours later the horses were brought out, and as the two friends stood before the house to take their leave, Walker bent down to 'Lisbeth and whispered in her ear. She did not reply, but a deep blush suffused her cheeks and neck, and when her eyes met those of the young officer the latter vaulted into the saddle with a shout of joy, and the two riders sped through the bush with their hearts full of bliss and happiness.

In the same year Mr. Powell sold his cattle, and left the wild country by the Murray. He exchanged his station for another, situated in a more civilized part of Australia, at the foot of the Blue Mountains.

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